





YARBOROUGH THE PREMIER

A NOVEL

BY

A. R. WEEKES



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I

A WATCHER BY MOONLIGHT

CLOUDS of moonlit vapour, carved by a southern wind into changeful shapes of citadel or island, slid rapidly across the azure of their shifting realm. The night was full of blurred noises: the trees, in the fulness of early leafage, conspiring with the wind-borne murmur of surf on a distant strand to make a sombre harmony of spring. The broken shadow of Chanston lay black across the crisp grass of the terrace, silvered with chill dew. Built by a Yarborough, after the design of Philibert Delorme, and held by them without a break, it had become typical, in its dark and irregular strength, of the men of their race, who had a name in the countryside for hardihood and caprice. Sacked by the Puritans in the evil days when Charles Yerburch followed his namesake to the scaffold, its great wings were burned down, but the broad, many-gabled front, with the quaint *tourelle*, such as Méryon loved to sketch, clinging like a marten's nest

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about its northern angle, survived the wreck. The wide central porch, gained by shallow steps and supported by twisted pillars carved, no two alike, after a Ferrarese arcade, was added by his son, who saw fit to turn Puritan within a year of the Restoration, but was forgiven by his cynical sovereign with a scoff at his faithless perversity.

Dark against the single illuminated window which traced a rectangle of gold on the moon-silvered lawn, appeared the figures of two men. Sir Edmund YARBOROUGH, master of the house, lay back in a luxurious chair, himself in perfect harmony with the rich traditional quiet of the room: he was a slender, distinguished, indolent-looking man, but the race-mark of pride and intractable caprice was stamped on every feature of his oval face: on the hazel irids, thin nose, and flexible, mocking lips. MAINWARING SAVILE, his guest, who lounged, hand on hip, with an assured recklessness of bearing, in the recess of the window, was a politician of a rare type. His great height and massive physique, and the sculptured granite of his head, with its colourless features and wide, clear, gray eyes, spoke of wanderings and of warfare in many lands. Their voices were alike in a quality of clear penetration, which made them audible from lawn and porch above the rushing of the wind: but Sir Edmund's was varied and animated and shaded with satire, and his diction almost puritanical in its elegance, while Savile spoke in a racy monotone, tinged with the drawl of America, and flavoured with phrases from alien civilisations.

“Do you think you are wise to carry it with you?”

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Sir Edmund asked, breaking a pause which had fallen between him and his guest.

"I reckon it's tolerably safe with me. Do you expect me to drop it, or leave it in a railway carriage like an old umbrella?"

"It is well worth the expense of an assassination, my dear Savile."

Savile smiled somewhat grimly. "I should rather like to be assassinated," he said, clinching his hand over the Tudor roses carved on the transom of the open casement; "it would be rather an amusing experience: more amusing for me than for the other fellow, I expect. I should think he wouldn't try it on twice."

"I should not care to try and assassinate you myself," said Sir Edmund, dryly, "but the shabbiest cause has its fanatics. And to be sure your little treaty is quite an important affair: the prestige of England is involved in it."

"Ah, that's what the mob think," Savile said with easy scorn. "Of course if they got wind of it there'd be a row."

"Lord Hayes would have to resign, Lord Ferdinand Savile would cease to be the figurehead of the Foreign Office, and Mr. Mainwaring Savile would lose his under-secretaryship and all those little political strings which he manipulates so nicely, invisible in the background."

"Dare say; but they're not going to get wind of it for another six months, and by that time they'll have forgotten the whole caboodle."

"You will never be taken quite seriously as a poli-

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tician, my dear fellow, till you forget that you have been a cow-boy."

"I shouldn't say *caboodle* in the House, but I'm off duty to-night. After all, I'm not sure but what I'm chiefly a cow-boy still. I get pretty sick of all *this* sometimes." He threw out his sunburned hand with a gesture which included the yellow-lighted interior, and the indigo-blue of the moonlit sky and lawn. "I can hear the sea loud enough to-night, and smell it too: the air's rank with salt."

"How injurious to my syringas! Do keep to the point—that is, if you have a point to keep to. What is it you want?"

"I've brought the draught down to show you; don't you think your opinion's worth having?"

"Most eminently so; but I'm surprised that you do."

"If I'm a cow-boy in politics, you're an epicure; but I know you have done good diplomatic work on the Continent, and I expected to get some first-hand information out of you regarding the temper of the powers in question. Besides, your wits are valuable when you condescend to concentrate them. You can't read our new cipher?"

"How should I—unless you think I made an inquisition into your papers when you were staying here at Christmas?"

Savile laughed. "Come to think of it, I did have a notion once or twice that some one had meddled with my desk; but I put it down to cats, and took to locking the door."

"Perhaps Christian played the spy on you; he is

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capable of it. He is one of the fanatics who would not stop short even of assassination. I wish you could hear his criticisms on your diplomatic policy in the past."

"Your brother? He's a Rad."

"He is a man of sense, profound sense. You will be sorry to hear that you have had a narrow escape of meeting him to-night. I have been expecting him this last hour; but he will not come now; don't hope for it."

"I'm glad of it. We don't get on."

"The more fool you! He is great on foreign politics; has all the courts of Europe at his fingers'-ends, and would yield you a richer store of curious information than you will ever draw from me. You might have shown him your treaty!"

Savile smiled somewhat grimly. "I wouldn't trust him within ten yards of the thing."

"Not even in cipher?"

"Oh, I wouldn't back him not to read it; he is so infernally clever."

"Also he is a Rad; a pity that. He wars against all the traditions of our house." Sir Edmund turned his head and tilted his chin with an odd, feminine motion; an untranslatable gleam came into the eyes that looked forth into vague spaces of moonlight. "He is too ambitious; he means, you know, to be premier. Upon my life, he is almost worth fighting."

"He has all the brains of the party," Savile said suggestively. "If we make a mess of this affair, and have to go out (which is on the cards, you know), I

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wouldn't put it beyond him to come in as premier at thirty. You'd like that?"

"Faith, I shouldn't; the impudence of the boy! Yes . . ." Edmund let his voice die away, and Savile, tingling with impatience, believed that the prize of his self-restraint was within reach. "Then, why not help us?" he said.

"What a glorious night it is! You did not hear a footstep in the avenue, did you?"

Savile uttered an exclamation of disgust. "Commend me to a Yarborough for annoyingness! Our existence as a government is at stake. Do you think I came down here to talk about the moon?"

"I would you had, for you're charming company when you don't talk shop. Never mind," — he paused a moment, and his voice fell penetrating and chill across the onset of the wind, while he looked up laughing into Savile's face. "Come, I'll give you the benefit of my intelligence, if it were only to annoy my ambitious brother; read me out this wonderful draught."

"Sure we can't be overheard?"

"No one in the corridor could hear what we say at this end of the room; and the garden of course is deserted."

Savile contented himself with a brief glance over the moon-bright terrace, and into the shadows of the old porch. So reassured, he drew from his pocket a large sheet of paper covered with indecipherable hieroglyphics, and commenced to read it aloud, in a monotonous yet penetrating voice, which had the orator's gift of arresting attention. Sir

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Edmund listened, with a languid air which imperfectly disguised the concentration of his powers of pure analysis, while it was read to the end.

"Now," said Savile, folding the paper, "now, Yarborough, your verdict?"

Yarborough's neutral calm dissolved in a flash of malign laughter. "Most admirable!" he said.

"What's the good of that? I want something more practical."

"Made public now, it would cost you your ministerial lives; six months hence, it will pass with a few grumbles. In history it will be known as the Hayes ministry's crowning blunder."

"Don't agree with you in the least," said Savile, crossly. "Why?"

"My dear, dearest fellow, can't you see? Good Heavens!" Edmund threw up his delicate hands with a comical gesture of despair. "Are you so blind that you can't see it's ruinous?"

"Then what would you have us do?"

"Precisely what you are doing."

"Thank you! You're a useful counsellor."

Yarborough moved his slender shoulders. "It's madness; but it's chivalrous madness. My brother is not chivalrous in the least; he would adopt the obvious, but scandalous, alternative."

"Has he any morals?"

"None whatever, where politics are concerned. I have: that's why I bid you go on and prosper."

"What, you who think we're ruining the country?"

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"Oh, it's so much more artistic to lose the fight with clean hands than to win it by a trick."

"And a peculiarly dirty one, at that. Our only other course would be repudiation."

"Christian would say, Repudiate. For me"—Yarborough looked very much as if he would have liked to put his tongue in his cheek—"I bid you preserve the honour of England in its pristine purity. Our politicians are always so pure, you know; they are blunt islanders, rough but sincere. After all, it may not cost us more than a few hundred millions sterling and a European war."

"Mocking spirit!" Savile turned on him angrily. "My faith, Yarborough, you're too bad! I wish I'd stayed in town."

"Don't say that; the champagne was admirable."

"Hardly worth catching the last train down and the first train back for, all the same."

"Yes, that's a pity. I should have been delighted to put you up. You diplomats are always in a hurry; you're the dearest fellows, but very exhausting."

Savile could not help smiling. He walked up and down the room, whistling a few bars of a Magyar folk-song. "I'll tell you what," he said, coming to a stand-still before his host, who lay with half-shut eyes, the incarnation of indolent perversity, "we're all in a mess together, but I'll back this treaty to do its work as well as any other—yes, and better too. But I want your help for Clause XII., and you've got to give it me. You know the men, the places, the interests involved; you were working at

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Berlin three years ago. You're one of us, you stand and fall with us; you've eaten our bread, and taken our pay. That's coarsely put, but it's true, I guess. You can't go back on us now."

"Dearest fellow, do you mean to insult me?" Yarrowborough drawled. Savile divined, rather than saw, that he had struck with a master-hand the sensitive strings of far-inherited pride.

"Heaven forbid," he answered. "But it sounds shabby, doesn't it?"

"You're right, and what I know is at your service. Recapitulate the heads of the draught."

Savile, triumphant, obeyed; and when the recital was completed they fell into a discussion in which Sir Edmund laid aside his mask of faineance, and displayed those qualities of subtle, close, and detailed analysis which had originally won him a subordinate sinecure in the Hayes administration, with scope for the occasional exercise of his idiosyncratic gifts. They had settled the opening clauses, when suddenly Savile broke off and threw up his hand with a sharp gesture to enforce silence. "Hark!" he said, "what's that?"

They listened intently. The wind wailed in the trees and poured round the old walls like a gush of water; in its lulls came the intermittent murmur of the surf. Leaves danced over the lawn in flakes of shadow, but no living thing moved upon it. Savile stepped suddenly across to the door, and threw it wide, moving noiselessly like a cat; the long corridor stretched before him, empty and brightly lighted. Hurrying softly back, he leaned out of the great

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window into the night, which mocked him with its dance of shadows; his eyes, keen as a Sioux's, travelled over the terrace barred with moonlight, and the lawn freaked with changeful dark, and dwelt longest on the porch with its twisted pillars, where the white light played like sword-blades in and out between the opaque shadows of the arcade. But he turned away at last with a disappointed air.

"I could have sworn I heard some one stirring, but I suppose I was wrong. Yet, to a trained ear, there's something almost unique in human movements, especially in the movements of a man that's trying to keep quiet. Animals move stealthily enough, but not with that rigid tension of secrecy; a man's feet are tied by self-consciousness."

"Pure imagination!" Yarborough assured him. "I promise you, our country-folk are not so deeply versed in politics!"

"Some one might have got wind of my mission," Savile rejoined, still with an air of uneasiness. "That step you pretended to hear might as easily as not have been a real one. I'd like to give chase, and set my mark on the eavesdropper if I caught him; but I've no time to-night. However, we'll make all safe." He locked the door, shut and fastened the hasp of the window, and came and seated himself beside Yarborough's chair, lowering his voice almost to a whisper, and they resumed their interrupted discussion.

They were still arguing when the clock struck three, and Savile looked up with an exclamation which betrayed his continental training. "Mille

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diabables! And the train goes at three-fifty. I must go!"

"Can't you stay?"

"I've a dozen things to do to-night—to-day, rather—before I meet Lord Ferdinand at ten. I tried for a special, but couldn't get it; and the slow takes two hours to get up. Confound you! why do you live in this derelict village?"

Yarborough got up and unfastened the window. "I like to be at a distance from the station," he explained urbanely. "Surely you can walk four miles in fifty minutes?"

"But the treaty, man, the treaty! We've not finished."

"Oh, haven't we? I hoped we had."

"We haven't touched Clause XII. yet, and that's the kernel of it all. Yarborough, come up to town with me!"

Edmund laughed in his face. "What, I? Mon cher, I've no taste for midnight journeys."

The spurt of energy, begotten of wounded pride, was over, and Savile saw that it would be idle to urge his point. He cursed the preoccupation which had blinded him to the passing of the hours, while he recognized that the spell was cast by the very adroitness of intellect which made Edmund Yarborough an ally worth courting. The eccentric politician must be taken on his own terms, or not at all; and Savile decided that anything was better than to lose his criticism on the point where it was likely to be most effectual.

"I'll leave it with you, and you can look it over

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and make notes. Then I'll send one of my men down and fetch it some time to-morrow. Mind, you're not to post it; I wouldn't trust it out of my ken for all the gold of Yukon."

"I'll sleep with it under my pillow," Yarborough answered, with a mocking inflection which Savile found exasperating.

"You'll lose your berth if it comes out," he said savagely.

"You will never *lose* your manners," Yarborough retorted smiling. "Why are you not more civilised? Good-night: I'll guard it as the apple of my eye."

Savile turned as he stepped into the avenue, and looked over his shoulder at the thin pliant form and decisive features. "Mind you do, that's all," he shouted back, "for it's life and death to us."

Yarborough came back into the empty room with those words ringing in his ears. He picked up the treaty, yawned, glanced at the clock, glanced at the treaty, and yawned again. The fuel of excitement had burned down to ashes, and he felt very much inclined to go to bed. At the farther end of the room stood a massive oak chest, bound with iron and clamped to the wall; the antique spring by which it opened was known only to Sir Edmund and his brother Christian, for in it they kept all bonds, securities, insurances, and other business papers relating to their private affairs. Edmund touched the spring, and laid Savile's invaluable document on the top of the whole medley, which consisted of the joint accumulation of many years. Then the lid fell

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with a jarring clang, and the philosopher was free to seek his couch with a conscience void of offence and free from presentiment.

Meanwhile Savile was leaning back in the corner of a first-class compartment, smoking a cigar of a favourite brand, the look of annoyance fading out of his face as he recalled and reviewed the suggestions advanced by his host. He acknowledged that he had been dealing with a very clever man, whose help was cheaply bought even at the price of a midnight journey in a train which stopped at every station. He had no real fear for the treaty; he knew Yarbrough, in spite of his idle and shiftless ways, to be a man of scrupulous honour and sensitive pride, who would sooner die than betray a trust. On the whole, the Foreign Minister's nephew and under-secretary was fairly content with his night's work.

He was nearing Waterloo, and had almost dropped asleep, when an incident occurred which roused his faculties to their normal keenness, and left an impression of vague dissatisfaction on his mind. Amid an accompaniment of whistles, the train slackened speed, stopped, reversed, and backed slowly into a siding; and Savile, thrusting his head out of the window, witnessed a scene which he never forgot. The wind had dropped, and the sun was just above the horizon, a dilated disk of silver, its edge dissolved in a fog which steeped the dreary flats of Clapham in a chill and dripping whiteness. Out of the blank white vapour of the south, where Chanston lay beside the sea, a solitary engine, steadied on the rails by an empty tender, raced past the halted

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train with levers clanging and fires that flickered up into the wind, and disappeared into the abiding night of the city. Savile, who had tried in vain to get a special, cursed his luck as it approached; as it passed, he caught a fleeting picture of the men who rode on it. The driver stood with a hand on the brake; the stoker was in the act of piling fuel upon the furnace; wary and occupied, their minds were riveted to their work. The solitary passenger stood free with folded arms, his body yielding easily to the rocking of the levers: his lips moved in dumb rhetoric, dark fire dwelt in his eyes, with the face of a man who makes himself a king or a god he looked out over the smoky dreaming city. Savile started from his seat, as if with some half-formed purpose of calling him by name, but sank back again as the engine thundered past, and the odd tableau was carried on into the gloom.

“Well,” he said aloud, as he struck a match to light his morning cigar, “if I hadn’t got Edmund’s word to the contrary, I could have sworn that was Christian Yarborough.”

II

KINDRED

MAINWARING SAVILE was a man of moderate ambitions; conscious that he already held the invisible strings of power, he was the less in a hurry to grasp at its outward show. In a reactionary age, when young men were everywhere coming to the front, when generosity was at a discount, and humility did not come into the market at all, people called him supine, because he never showed the least anxiety to supplant his uncle; but, in truth, he was simply biding his time, conscious that at thirty-five he could well afford to wait a few years till supremacy should come naturally to his hand, without risk of mortifying Lord Ferdinand. He felt also the limitations of his inexperience, and the value of the elder man's practical acquaintance with the past. There was however a touch of aloofness in his attitude which went some way to justify those who called him a crank: he was a rigidly honourable man, and had no tolerance for the tricks and shifts, the midnight stabs and the treacherous compromises of the political arena. He never bowed the knee before the idol of expediency: he never served himself of popular shibboleths: he often failed to keep in mind the artificial distinctions of party: his

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ideals were racy and primitive, and smacked of the sea.

The fog did not lift all day, and the gas was lit in the streets when Savile walked back to his chambers in Madison Street, after a busy day spent at the Foreign Office. The cries of the newspaper boys rang thin and faint in his ears: he neither heard what they said, nor observed that curious eyes were fixed upon him as he passed. He let himself in and went straight up to his study. The room was quite dark, and he supposed it empty: but, as he crossed the threshold, an invisible voice said lazily:

“You can always go yachting, y’ know.”

Savile switched the button of the electric light before answering. It revealed a large, bare room, lined with bookcases, neat with the neatness of a soldier servant, and containing a single arm-chair, which was at present occupied, as he had anticipated, by a tall thin man in a gray tweed suit, who sat contentedly trying to smoke an extinct cigar. “Oh, it’s you, is it?” he said carelessly. “What do you want, anyway?”

“I—er—called to offer my condolences.”

Savile raised his eyebrows. “Thanks, my dear Estcourt: do I need them?”

Estcourt nodded vaguely towards the evening paper which he had brought in and thrown down on the table. “Bit awkward, I thought, that’s all,” he explained. “But I suppose you know your own business best.”

Savile was lighting his pipe, and paused a moment before speaking: the glow flickered and died over his

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strong and colourless features. "I don't understand," he said slowly. "Is it a riddle?"

"Haven't you seen the evening papers?"

"No: why?"

"The deuce you haven't!" Estcourt exclaimed, with an energy foreign to his temperament. "Then you had better, that's all."

"Anything in our line?" Savile asked. "Sensational head-lines in this sort of thing are generally a fake, you know."

"It's circumstantial enough, anyhow."

"Let's hear it, then."

"It purports to give the exact terms of a new German alliance, secretly worked out by a bribed F. O., and mercifully revealed on the eve of conclusion to the disinterested correspondents of the leading Liberal journals. It says there has been nothing like it since the *Times* forced ministers to show their hand in 1854."

"Ah!" said Savile softly. His hand closed suddenly and crushed the flimsy sheet: his breathing thickened and was taken with difficulty. Estcourt drew his own conclusions as to the importance of the revelations, and kept them to himself.

"It's on page three," he said, with an inquisitive glance. "Inserted in going to press, don't you know?"

Savile smoothed out the page, and ran his eye over the loose, black type of the "Latest News" column. The letters danced before his eyes: he could read it only by an effort of will. Not one clause had escaped: though the original draught was here con-

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densed, no article of any significance was omitted. He read it through once, and jerked it away: it fell on the edge of the table, and thence to the floor. Estcourt was scared by the sight of Savile's furious anger and calm, and by the sudden wrath in his gray eyes.

"If I knew who had done this—!" he exclaimed, and broke off to repeat his words with convulsed lips. "I'd make him rue it!"

"I'm glad you don't know," Estcourt said truthfully: he was not heroic, and distrusted other men's emotions, having few of his own.

"Là, là," Savile said softly: and suddenly he seemed to put away his anger, and master it and chain it down subservient. "We shall go out over this, Tony. With a risky little majority like ours, we shall never be able to ride out such a storm. Clever—very."

"You've no guess who did it?"

"None whatever: unless—"

Again his face changed, and put on a look of infinite watchfulness, the look of a trapper marking down a trail. "What fools men are!" he said without bitterness.

"You mean?"

"I mean myself, for trusting a man without faith or energy. However, he must stand the racket: I can't shield him."

"Who is it?"

"Edmund Yarborough—fool that he is! He's let it slip through his fingers. It's bound to come out, so I may as well gratify your itching ears."

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"Surely Yarborough's hardly the man to sell it? He's impecunious, but as proud as Lucifer."

"Proud? He's a fool, that's all. I'd sooner handle a coward or a mercenary any day of the week than a downright fool like Edmund Yarborough. —Well, what is it?"

Savile's valet, a smart, grave American, had appeared in the doorway. "Sir Edmund Yarborough has called to see you, sir," he explained.

The two men exchanged glances. "I'll go," Estcourt said hurriedly. "Don't have him shown up till I'm out of it. I don't want to meet him."

"Afraid of a scene, eh? There isn't going to be any scene, Tony, so you needn't get nervous: however, Markham shall let you out by a back way."

Unabashed by the contempt that lurked in Savile's tone, Estcourt fled: and a minute later Edmund Yarborough was ushered in. Savile had been angry, Estcourt excited; but in Yarborough's face there was no room for the lesser emotions. Ruin had fallen upon him, and he accepted it proudly, but not without sickness of heart. He bowed, taking no notice of Savile's outstretched hand.

"You do not, of course, understand what has brought me here," he began. "I came—"

"To bring back the treaty?" Savile suggested dryly.

"I—I have not brought it—I—" he made a sharp call upon his self-control, and spoke more calmly. "I have lost it, Savile. It was stolen in the night."

Savile shrugged his shoulders. "You don't say so!"

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"I laid it away in an old coffer, where the most important and valuable of our business papers are always kept. I believed it to be safe. In the morning, when I opened the coffer, it was gone."

"Very singular. And you allow that it was stolen?"

Yarborough lifted his head, looking haughtily into Savile's mocking eyes. "Am I to understand that you are already in possession of the facts?" he asked.

Savile picked up the newspaper and handed it to him, marking with his forefinger the incriminating paragraph.

Yarborough glanced down the column: the colour faded out of his face.

"I see I am too late," he said quietly. "Too late for you—and for myself."

"Pity you weren't more careful: I told you not to leave it about."

"You need not fear that any blame will fall on you. I, and I alone, am in fault: and I am now on my way to make all necessary explanations in the proper quarters."

"They'll probably unfrock—I mean, break you for it."

"Inevitably."

"You've some pluck, anyhow," said Savile critically. "After all, it was an accident."

"One of those accidents which are not allowed to happen."

"Have you any guess who did it?"

"None."

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"He must have known our cipher: that limits the field a bit. And he was a smart man at his trade, too. Was the safe much knocked about?"

"It was intact."

"Queer, that. Who had the key?"

"There are three locks, opening each by a different spring, of which the secret has been jealously guarded."

"I take it that the noise I heard was the footstep of a spy, who hid himself, by the aid of the powers of darkness, when I looked out of the window. Could he have found out how to work those springs simply by watching you when you put the treaty away in it?"

"Impossible: they are too intricate."

"It's a queer story," said Savile. His tone was pregnant with innuendo: it brought a flush to Edmund Yarborough's dark cheek.

"Very queer," he echoed unflinchingly. "And very suspicious."

"M'yes." Savile darted a keen glance at him, from eyes lynx-bright, their pupils contracted to pin-points. "By-the-bye, that brother of yours—what was he doing in that special?"

"What special? Christian does not travel in specials, so far as I am aware."

"My slow was shunted for a special this morning, and your brother was on it."

"I expected him at Chanston, as you know, but he did not arrive. I think—"

He was forced to break off: his voice died in his throat. The events of the night flashed upon them

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both in a succession of pictures: the step at the window, the rifled safe, the problem of the intact spring, the racing special, the solitary passenger hurrying through the white chill of dawn. To Savile, as he recalled Christian Yarborough's dubious repute and wavering ethics, came confirmation of his vague suspicion: to Edmund, in one blinding moment packed with storm-fires, came certainty. The very magnitude of the blow left him perforce competent to think and act: it seemed an eternity, it was in reality only the intake of a breath, before he completed his sentence.

"—you must have made a mistake."

The accent rang false, and he knew it: and he was not surprised to read disbelief in Savile's face. "I saw him plain as I see you now," Savile said. "You know what a striking face it is—not much like the average."

"You were deceived by twilight, or by a chance resemblance."

Savile's lip curled. "Shielding him, eh?" he said harshly. "That won't work with me, you know."

"Do I understand that you accuse him?"

"I shouldn't wonder if he stole the treaty."

"He is my brother."

"But cunning as a fox and shabby as a rat, all the same."

"Perhaps you apply those epithets to me also?"

Savile took him suddenly by the shoulders and pushed him towards the lamp: he put his hand under Edmund's chin, held up his face to the light, and looked into it: "No, I don't," he said, letting

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him go with an indifference which was in itself an insult. "You're not a thief. But we all know what he is."

"God help me!" Edmund stammered, his voice shaken with passion: he shrank from Savile's handling as a lady might shrink from some gross personal indignity. "You cad! you think you can do what you like with any man weaker than yourself."

"You're hysterically sensitive," Savile returned coolly. "I go a good deal by men's faces, that's all. I'd stake my life on your innocence, now: before, I wouldn't have betted an even sixpence."

"I have the bad taste to be extremely indifferent to your opinion," Edmund retorted. "Are you going to denounce Christian on the strength of this very cogent evidence?"

"Not till I can prove my case."

"I commend your wisdom: people might say that it was because you had a prejudice against him."

"I certainly do hate that fellow," Savile admitted, more to himself than to Edmund. "And it's a flimsy chain of evidence. Yet *you* were certain. Why were you so certain?"

Suddenly turning, he levelled one of his long piercing looks at Edmund Yarborough, who met it without flinching. "What made you so sure it was he that did it? What do you know that you haven't told me?"

"What do you suppose, now—that we're both deep in a Radical plot and are going to divide the bribe?"

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“What was that damning item that sprang up in your memory just now and drove the blood out of your face? You recognised his footstep, or you can recall suspicious words, or—Heaven of Heavens, I’ve got it! Of course, he knew the spring.”

Edmund was silent for a moment, divided between loyalty to his brother and obedience to his own code of honour. Nothing would fully meet the exigencies of such a question except a flat denial, such as Christian himself would have given without a qualm, and would probably be most indignant with him if he failed to give it: but then Christian had owned *in camera* that he rather liked telling lies, while Edmund held a Puritan ideal of truth worthy of George Washington. In the end, the obvious irony of his answer was scarcely a compliment to Christian, but it was perhaps the best that could have issued from such a contest of the cardinal virtues. “He is of age: ask him,” he said cynically: “he shall speak for himself.”

Savile burst out laughing. “Ha! that’s good,” he said. “You won’t tell lies for him, anyhow.”

“You laugh, Mr. Savile, and that is so charming of you; but will you not impart to me the point of your amusement? Is it that I am an innocent man ruined for life, and on the brink of public degradation? Or is it that you proved a few minutes ago that you are my superior in physical strength? You are English, and the English are so generous: and no doubt it is because I am cosmopolitan that I do not quite appreciate your generosity or your humour. Well—that is all, I think. Good-night!”

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Savile did not defend himself: he would have found it hard to do so. He set little store by the amenities of civilisation, and found Edmund Yarborough, with his nerves, and caprices, and foreign tricks of manner, mysterious and exasperating; and, though he was compelled to own that he had acted unfairly in wreaking his temper upon the ruined man, he justified himself by the reflection that Edmund, if not an accomplice in Christian's misdeeds, was certainly an accessory after the fact.

Meanwhile Edmund Yarborough threaded his way eastward through the crowded streets of the sombre nocturnal Babylon, himself a mask in a world of masks, a unit in the teeming panorama of white, absorbed faces. He found himself, at last, in one of those sinister *culs de sac* which lie within a couple of turnings of St. Martin's Lane, deserted except for an occasional patrol of police: the blind side-walls of factories, pierced only by a few slits of barred and smoky glass, leaned up and inward on either side, leaving only a narrow strip of gloom overhead, while the pavement was but a broken footway, scantily lit by the flicker of a broken gas-lamp at the entrance. The end of the alley, however, was filled up by an old, country-looking house, stained with the smoky rains of a hundred years, its front scarred by the tearing down of what had probably been a handsome portico, as a tree is scarred by the lopping of a bough, while a rustic balcony still ran along under the windows of the first story. All the splendour and glitter and crime of London went roaring by a quarter of a mile

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away: and yet there it stood, the little dumb house, quiet as the grave, holding the secrets of a hundred evil years, and throbbing no less vividly to-night with the heart-beats of a wild human ambition. Two men out of all London had the key of that deserted house, and Edmund Yarborough was one of them; he let himself into the small square hall, where a jet of gas burned feebly, and softly closed the door, which was of solid oak, and massive enough to deaden sound.

Edmund climbed the winding stair, which had the usual accompaniments of blistered paint, rickety balustrade, and foot-sore oil-cloth, and noiselessly opened a door to the right of the square landing; it swung inward without a creak, and he stood on the threshold of a large bare room lighted by an intensely vivid lustre of electric light from a dozen burners. The walls were stripped to lath and plaster, the ceiling had once been whitewashed, the mantel-piece was of chipped stucco, and beside the empty grate stood an old japanned scuttle: but the window which filled the opposite wall was masked with oaken shutters of recent date fastened with iron bars, and the deal table, eight feet square, which stood in the centre of the room, was covered with masses of papers, some printed, some in MS., all neatly docketed as if of the first importance. And there before it sat the man who had called the little dead house to life through many a feverish night, with a fountain-pen between his fingers, covering sheet after sheet with a rapid, tiny writing, cramped like an old man's hand, finely looped,

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black, flourished, and legible as print. He made no errors, no revisions, no amplifications: once or twice he consulted his notes, or looked up a reference, but for the most part he wrote on without pause or alteration, fast as that flying pen could travel.

Edmund Yarborough saw his brother in profile, under a full blaze of light. He was a man of middle height, broad-shouldered, of a strong and yet nervous physique: his complexion had the clear ivory pallor of the perfectly healthy man who spends his life in-doors. Dark hair went back in a thick wave over his temples, and his eyes were of a clear dark gray stained with black, under fine, straight, black brows. The fire of an imperious temperament had so modelled every lineament, as wax is modelled under heat, that his features had become a reflex of his character; and strong and strange were the passions inscribed upon them. The workings of a fertile and unscrupulous intellect had bent the deep brow, and the wide eyes looked forth into a world of ambitious dreams with the arrogance of conscious power: the sensuous delicate curve of cheek and chin betrayed the artist and the dreamer, while the indolent still lips might break as well into a smile of acrid and most piercing satire, as into that profound irony which is almost tender. Withal it was a young face, the face of a man who would never grow old: one could imagine that the spirit might wear out the body, but not that the body could survive the quenching of the spirit's flame. Edmund reflected that if he had not known his brother to be

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a scoundrel, he would assuredly have taken him for a patriot of the most disinterested type.

He came forward, with his catlike step: Christian, absorbed, did not hear him. Edmund thought him wonderfully unguarded for a guilty man: what if after all he should be innocent? Hope, like a tide of new life, invaded his veins. He came a step nearer, and got a second sensation, neither mental nor emotional, but physical: suspension, inertia, arrest of bodily faculties. The stolen treaty was lying on the table, close at his brother's side. Standing behind him, he touched him on the shoulder. Christian's nerve was well disciplined, for he was not disconcerted even by the first sickening thrill of detection, although he had believed himself alone in the room and in the house. He wrote to the end of his sentence, dried his pen, and carefully laid it away before he so much as turned his head. Then he looked up at his brother.

"You, Edmund?" he said: "did you come to fetch the treaty? Take it, and my blessing go with you: it's nothing but waste-paper now."

"You stole it?" Edmund asked, in level tones of commonplace: but he was forced to lean against the table to steady himself. "You admit it?"

"Admit it? I glory in it, and advise you to thank Heaven upon your knees this night that there is one member of our family who has wit enough to see his duty to his country and heroism enough to perform it."

"I am not quite prepared to regard you as a martyr," Edmund observed dryly. "At present

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"I cannot get beyond the fact that you are a thief."

"You call it a theft? Well, the true patriot is ever misunderstood."

"I call it a theft of a very dastardly nature. Christian—" Edmund came to a sudden pause: the knowledge that he was speaking to his own brother, the comrade of his childhood and boyhood, the friend and intimate of later days, came over him in a sudden wave of affection. The bond of kinship had strong hold over the hearts of all the Yarboroughs: Edmund felt its power straitened about him, and would not have resisted it if he could. "Christian," he said again, more gently, "we are brothers, are we not? You cannot put me off with talk. You know, and I know, that you have done a thing such as no Yarborough ever did before: will you tell me the reason?"

"Is it possible that you don't see any reason?"

"You stole it, and sold it to the papers, and I suppose they paid a high price for it. But, if it was only for the money, why did you not come to me?"

Christian might have broken every commandment in the decalogue (and he had broken most of them), yet would not have blushed, however roundly taxed with his misdemeanours. But, at Edmund's words, the colour came into his face, and he looked away.

"For the money? For a bribe? Ah, thanks, Edmund." He tilted back his chair and put his hands in his pockets. "To be sure, I have extravagant tastes: I sold the treaty to pay my gambling debts and my tailor's bill."

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"I beg your pardon," Edmund exclaimed. "I thought—I could only guess—"

"And don't I tell you you were right—quite right?"

"But then I know you of old, and that you only blush when you are innocent."

"Well, perhaps I was not wholly mercenary," Christian admitted, with a quizzical glance. "Granted, I am a knave, my dear Edmund: but I trust I am not such a fool as to risk my position for a few hundreds which I could have got from you for the asking."

"And still less would you have risked mine, which, by-the-bye, is irretrievably lost. I shall have to fly the country to avoid inconvenient questions."

"I have ruined you, of course," Christian said in a quick, business-like tone. "I was prepared for that. Savile is a man of inveterate revenges."

"You do not like Mainwaring Savile?"

"He is clever," said Christian meditatively. "He is very strong; strong enough perhaps to defeat me, certainly to defy. My earliest act, on obtaining power, will be to obtain for him a position in the most distant corner of the empire."

"On obtaining power? Ambitious boy, how do you know that you will obtain power?"

"Who else can govern, if not I? Savile is clever and strong, but he is a fool: his conscience never gives him a free hand. Lord Hayes is an old man, and weary of holding the balance of an elusive majority. Lord Ferdinand Savile is a fool of the exhausted aristocratic type, and would do better as a minor

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poet. As Windsor is fond of him, he might hope to become Laureate. But I—I was created to be premier."

The epicurean who had played with life stood fascinated by the insolence of a magnificent egotism, rendered piquant and credible by the ironical power of brow and eyes. "What dreams, for a boy of nine - and - twenty!" he murmured. "You, premier? You?"

"Why not? I've understudied the part for seven years. Were I offered the leadership to-day, I would accept it, and I do not believe I should disgrace myself. But I do not want to be hampered by a predestinate policy. That treaty must, in any event, have gone when I became premier; but I preferred that it should never exist, so—I swept it away."

"Ah, I divined you would find it impracticably honest," said Edmund dryly.

"It was honest to the point of guilelessness. It was, in fact, the Sermon on the Mount rendered politically, and when I'm premier I doubt if I shall find it advisable to love my enemies."

"I dare say not," Edmund agreed, with a little quiet laugh. "But tell me now: what would you have substituted for that treaty yourself?"

Christian leaned forward, his thin fingers playing restlessly with the pen; his dark eyes, lit by indwelling fire, looked forward into infinity. "Let me sketch it for you," he said, taking up a sheet of paper. "Are you blind, that you can't see? Why, it is all as plain as print. Any child could find the alternative: there is really only one course to

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take." While he spoke, he was writing rapidly: five minutes later he handed to his brother the complete skeleton of a document. Edmund glanced over it, and shook his head, smiling.

"It is delightfully expedient, but it is immoral. I prefer our own. By-the-bye, how did you become possessed of it?"

"You know I listened at the window?"

"But whither did you betake yourself when Savile looked out?"

"I slipped across the porch and in at the dining-room window. The rest was easy, for I can read Savile's cipher."

"Christian, I believe you have dealings with the devil. Where did you learn that?"

"The devil would not suit my book at all: he has far too strong a will of his own. I make friends frequently with men who may serve as tools; but when I want secret information, I try to procure it myself. In the present instance, I took advantage of his stay at Chanston to pick the lock of his desk and ransack it for the key."

"But he was our guest!" Edmund exclaimed.

"Precisely: that was why I got you to ask him."

Edmund had borne with a good deal: but it seemed to him that Christian, in this cynical avowal, had overstepped the extreme limits of the tolerable. "And this—this is my brother!" he said. "Because of our relationship I am to shield you, whom I knew before to be a liar and a thief, and now learn to be a spy! Well, I will not do it: I'll go with the whole story to Lord Ferdinand, and let him be judge."

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"You will never do it."

"On the contrary, I am about to do it."

Christian laughed in his face. "Not you!" he said scornfully.

"Why not?"

"You are caught in the toils of your own fine-gentlemanly casuistry. You will never do it, because it would be the ruin of me and the saving of yourself."

"And why should I not save myself at your expense?"

"Oh, you love me too well for that," Christian said. He leaned back, crossing his legs and looking full into Edmund's eyes. The indolent, satirical face expressed the very coquetry of cynicism. "Fascination is one of my weapons: when a man is too dangerous to be fought, I win him by personal charm. You hate me at the moment, but it is a long way to Downing Street, and you will be ready to give your life for me before you get there."

Edmund put up his hand to his throat, as if suffocating: there was a mist over his eyes, through which his brother regarded him, intolerably triumphant. "Masterly analysis, yours!" he whispered. "And true—oh yes, true—"

"I reckoned on your fastidious sense of honour," Christian explained. "It is a quality which I can gauge to a nicety in others, although it is a forbidden luxury to myself."

"Kith and kin, you and I," Edmund repeated softly; then added, in a flash of spiteful satisfaction,

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"Thank Heaven, I'm the elder son: Chanston does not fall to a charlatan."

Christian got up and went to the window; he unbarred the shutters, threw up the sash, and leaned out. "Curse the fog!" he said petulantly. "And curse the city too, for a Babylon of fools! Who in all this human ant-heap is worth serving? What scope for ambition is there in pulling the strings that jerk these dwarfed and starveling marionettes? See what desirable things life has to give me, if I did but stretch out my hand! There's love, holding the key of heaven and hell: there's music, that treasures the core of the world's passion in a handful of chords: starlight and dawn, lonely snow-peaks, valleys drenched in day-long sunshine, Italian hills where the grapes grow. I could make my life one symphony of delight with death for the closing chord of the tonic: and you call me a charlatan because I give it all up and take instead the crawling, strangling fogs of London."

Edmund took his hands and held them fast. "Christian, why do you sacrifice yourself for nothing, to an ambition? Give it up," he pleaded. "Keep your honour clean and come away with me!"

"No!" Christian put him aside and held him away. "Off with you, tempter! Thank Heaven, you can't stay in England; you would certainly get into hot water if you were cross-examined. And I will not go one step of the way with you: I must go through with this work that I've begun. Besides," he added with a flash of his old mocking

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manner, "my honour is pretty deeply mortgaged already."

"Is the prize worth winning?"

"Ten thousand times, no! To be premier is to be head fool among fools, rat royal among rodents. But there's work to do, and none but I to do it."

"You write your ego in capital letters, boy."

"I mean to write it across the empire before I die." He paused, collecting himself. "I have a fancy to hear you say you forgive me."

"You are unpardonable: yet I do forgive you. One must needs forgive, when one says good-bye."

"Is this, then, good-bye?"

"I shall be out of England to-morrow, perhaps never to set foot in it again. It is better so, for I cannot lie to shield you: I can't dishonour myself, even for my brother's sake."

"What it is to be an honourable man!" Christian said with his deep tone of irony. "But I can see that you had better go: and I think neither of us care for long farewells, so let this be the last, the last perhaps forever. But you have to promise me one thing before you go."

"And that is—"

"If I don't see you again for many years, don't dream that I've forgotten. I'm not of a stock that forgets. I let you go now, and gladly. I am not fond of making confidences, and you've a hateful trick of winning them from me. But I want—I must see you again before I die."

"That is a long way off: you are not yet thirty."

"Am I not? I lose count of time: nights and

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days count double, when I am working. I have another thirty years of work before me, I suppose: then age will come in one watch of the night, and death, let us hope, in the next. But when I'm old, and lonely, and hated, and famous, come back to me, Edmund, if it were only for a day! England is no place for you now, with your impracticable pride and sensitiveness: but it will all be forgotten thirty years hence: what is there that is not forgotten in thirty years?"

"One thing only, as I believe," Edmund answered simply: "and that is kinship. Never fear, boy, you're not so easily rid of me: I'll be back in less than thirty years."

Yarborough's ironical laugh rang out. "Come, then, and you shall hear me splintering lances with your colleagues in debate. Faith! which will win, they or I? And all alike so infinitely unprofitable!" His voice dropped suddenly to a pitch of weariness. "Fool that I am to care for it, I that have ruined you to win it! There, it's late: I heard a clock strike eleven just now. Never write to me: let it be as if you were dead and I had nothing to hope for but your resurrection. Good-night."

It was one of those partings which are like death, but worse than death, because they are decided not by impartial destiny, but by the characters of the actors. With other men it might have been different: with these two it could not be different. Edmund was an exile from the land of his birth, Christian was a prisoner there: and the seas of a stronger and deeper estrangement came between

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them, and bore them wider apart than the ebb and flow of the world's driving tides. Dead to each other, they separated; and Edmund went out into the night, while Christian stood long, with bent head, reviewing his own dishonour, the ruin of his brother, and all the loss and peril probably to be borne in pursuit of an inexplicable ambition.

III

THE BROAD, VINE-SHELTERED PATH

NEXT day, when Christian Yarborough threw back his shutters, the fog had cleared; beams of gold streaked the swarthy dun shadows of Bexton Street, the narrow windows sparkled behind their bars in the wet May sunshine, and all its gloomy roofs were ceiled with morning turquoise. An adept in the art of turning the key on disagreeable ideas, he threw off, by a strong effort of will, all memory of his brother's ruin, which was the only detail of his scandalous *coup* likely to affect his spirits, and turned resolutely to the business of the day. The idea of an impromptu supper-party had just occurred to him as desirable, and he was making out the menu in his head, when his meditations were broken by the appearance of Mainwaring Savile, dressed in rough gray clothes and a Panama hat, and treading the irregular pavement with a rapid and easy step. He was possessed of Yarborough's address in Bexton Street in the most natural way in the world, for he happened to be his landlord: and his visit was the less surprising in that Yarborough, who was often careless of his own concerns, had omitted to go through the formality of paying his last quarter's rent. Withdrawing from the window, Yarborough

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hurriedly disposed of various incriminating documents, including the treaty itself, took out his pocket-book, and counted upon the table the exact amount of his debt, indulging in a silent laugh as he did so: he did not for a moment suppose that Savile had called to collect his rent in person, but he was sure he could twist the debt into a pretext for making Savile cross, and making people cross was one of the dearest joys of his life: he was so clever at it. He appeared on the threshold just as Savile raised his hand to the bell.

"Come in, my dear fellow," he said: "I really must apologise for keeping you waiting; I'm afraid I'm a shocking man of business. However, it's ready for you now, if you don't mind coming upstairs."

Somewhat mystified, Savile followed Yarborough into the room, which bore traces of having been hurriedly cleared for action, and seated himself in the only unoccupied chair, towards which Yarborough waved his hand.

"Perhaps you'd better count it," he said, pushing over the money. "I never could keep accounts: no Yarborough can."

"What the deuce do you expect me to do with this?" Savile inquired, poking the little heap of gold with his forefinger.

"As a personal matter, I'd rather you didn't give it to the Additional Curates' Fund," his host replied airily. It is to be feared that Yarborough, as a rule, recognised the limitations of good taste only to break them. "But that's wholly a question for

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yourself to settle. You did call to collect my rent, didn't you?"

"Rent!" Savile exclaimed, suddenly catching Yarborough's drift, and he swept the coins aside with an angry jerk of his arm. "No; I called about that treaty you stole—chut! don't lie. Where's the good?"

"I never lie," said Yarborough haughtily. He was leaning against the mantel-piece, immobile as any statue, and his features wore a look of pride and conscious integrity which he had copied, before a looking-glass, from a bust of Pitt the younger.

"Settle that with your brother." This was a home-thrust, for it evinced more knowledge than Yarborough had anticipated: but he merely lifted his eyebrows. "I came to tell you what I'm going to do."

Yarborough bowed.

"Edmund Yarborough chooses to shield you. Why he should throw away his life for the sake of a swindling *vaurien* with a theft to his record, I can't pretend to say: probably he does it to save the family honour, for nine men out of ten will still believe him innocent, whereas nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand would *prima facie* reckon you up for guilty."

"Your theory is so attractive, and has so much to commend it, that I am really quite sorry it isn't true."

"I sha'n't justify my knowledge unless you drive me to it. Not from generous motives—don't dream it: but principally because I don't care to bring a

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charge unless I can prove it up to the hilt, which I can't do here in the teeth of Edmund's obstinacy. I've strong circumstantial evidence, but that's all. I could kick you out of the clubs, but I couldn't get you expelled from the House. Also I'd rather not handle political dirt if I can help it: it's a revolting business."

"If your political campaigns are conducted on the lines of the present interview, I should imagine that the business might easily become extremely revolting not only to you, but to any one who was compelled to be in your society for ten minutes at a time."

Savile waited till Yarborough had done, and then resumed exactly as if he had never spoken. "Therefore I don't propose to make public anything I know except under one contingency."

"And that is—?"

"You aren't the kind of man we want in our House of Commons. You're what my uncle would call 'bad form.'"

"The House being, of course, the criterion of good form—especially when it goes into Committee over the Home Rule Bill on a Thursday night."

"Don't know about that: but I allow they're all gentlemen, anyhow. And if I couldn't prove my case to satisfy a judge, I could make it very, very awkward for you. You see, you've got what they call an infelix reputation."

"Well, name your condition."

"You've got to give up politics."

"Give up politics? *I?* My dear Savile, you're

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mad, or chaffing." Incredulity gave way to amusement, for Savile was evidently in earnest, and Yarborough could not help laughing. Savile plainly did not see that he had said anything very remarkable, and still less that he was likely to inflict any particular loss upon his country by depriving it of Yarborough's services; and Yarborough liked an honest snub, and never dreamed of resenting it, though he could not help feeling as if he had received a douche of cold water in his face.

"I'll ruin you if you don't."

"This is an absurd proposal," Yarborough said more seriously. "I am not rich. I have only a younger brother's portion. Politics have been my trade, not my pastime. How do you expect me to earn my bread, if you debar me from the practice of a craft to which I have served so long an apprenticeship?"

"What do I care? Starve, if you like."

"In fine, this is blackmail."

"Blackmail?" repeated Savile.

"Yes, blackmail: levied upon a man whom, by your professed inability to prove him guilty, you are constrained in honour to believe innocent: levied also with the obvious end of facilitating your own advancement by getting rid of a rival whom you are pleased to consider dangerous."

"So bluff is your game? I might have guessed it."

"You might, if you could have brought yourself to admit that I might be innocent."

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A gleam of amusement travelled over Savile's features. "You think you can hold me up that way?" he asked.

"That racy, idiomatic English of yours, which has so strong a flavour of the veldt and the prairie and the road-agent's camp where you learned it, is hardly applicable here. I leave you your threats: I threaten no man. But I think it only fair to tell you that not one word you have said will ever have the slightest weight with me."

"That's frank, anyway. So you mean to face the music, do you?"

"Surely you, as a pure-minded Conservative, would not ask me to abandon my party, my principles, and my constituents?" Yarborough asked, looking very like the popular conception of Mephistopheles as he spoke, for he had such a hearty disdain for the gods whose ægis he invoked that he could not wholly banish it from his mobile countenance. Savile laughed outright.

"I don't ask you to forswear your principles: I know that's what you simply couldn't endure to do," he answered, rendering sneer for sneer. "However, I've laid down my terms: you can take them or leave them."

"If I hold my tongue in the House, you'll hold yours out of it? Thanks, the bargain is hardly equitable, for I think I could do you more harm than you could ever do to me."

"You mean I can't damage a reputation which is pretty well damaged already?"

Yarborough turned on him like a flash of light-

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ning, no longer the cynical, jesting devil of Goethe, but a Lucifer all fire, quick and armed for war,

"You dare to threaten me? Yes: words are cheap. Act on what you say, and I'll indict you for slander, plead my own cause, and mulct you in £1000 damages and the nickname of a fool."

"Why, you infernal scoundrel, you know you stole the treaty!" Savile exclaimed: and then sharply, as he saw Yarborough's hand go up to his breast, "By the Lord! he's got it in his pocket."

It was the literal truth, and Yarborough, by that slight, involuntary gesture, had betrayed his secret, as thousands of men before him have betrayed like secrets by a similar movement. He thought his last hour had come, as Savile stood and looked down at him, towering over him in the pride of his great strength: he stood at bay, white but self-possessed, racking his fertile brains for a way of escape.

"I want what you've got in your pocket," Savile said, his tone menacingly quiet, and stretching out an inexorable scarred hand. "Give it here, quick!"

"I'll die first," Yarborough cried, springing back with a theatrical air of defiance.

"Ha! so you admit it, do you? Give it quietly, unless you'd rather have me knock you down and search you."

"Take care what you do, Savile," Yarborough said slowly, meeting Savile's lowering eyes with a steady, penetrating glance. "I have a paper here which you can no doubt take if you choose: that I value it you may divine, since I carry it against my heart. Nevertheless, it is not the treaty."

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"What is it then?" Savile asked, without the slightest tinge of credulity.

"A woman's letter."

"Sorry I don't believe you," Savile said, and paused. "Well, show me the envelope," he added.

"You know the handwriting."

The merit of Yarborough's lies consisted partly in the aplomb with which they were delivered, and partly in the dexterity with which they were framed to fit the temper of the person addressed. Savile had all the antique virtues including chivalry, and Yarborough, though his personal acquaintance with that quality was of the scantiest, was clever enough to turn it to good account. "You can take it by force if you choose," he said, with an air of declining to answer for the consequences which made Savile feel uncomfortable. Yarborough was a man who went much into society, and had wit and beauty on his side. True, it was not a probable coincidence that the writing of his correspondent should be familiar to Savile, but it was quite on the cards: they moved in the same set, and notes of invitation are not, unfortunately, type-written. And then the mischief was done, the treaty was published: nothing was now at stake except Savile's private sense of justice, his revengeful temper, and his reluctance to be duped. Yarborough stood with his hands in his pockets, his finely cut nostrils quivering, watching Savile with dark, gleaming eyes. At length Savile stepped back, and Yarborough drew a quick breath, but not of triumph. Rather his look was that of a man who sees the

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gate of life shut in his face, and himself thrust back into perdition.

"You've won," Savile said concisely. "Won all along the line. I sha'n't face an action for slander, and I can't press my advantage against the honour of a hypothetical lady. I'm not your dupe, though. I know you're lying, and some day I'll prove it: I'll get the truth out of you some day, mind that."

"That, I trust, you will always do," replied Yarborough suavely. "I am handicapped in my political career by an old-fashioned disrelish of lies: it is the tax upon a long genealogy."

Savile leaned against the wall and gave way to silent laughter: he had found the whole scene comical, but Yarborough's closing utterance struck him as particularly rich in humour. He had to acknowledge himself beaten: moral indignation could effect nothing against Yarborough's truly extraordinary impudence and inimitable power of acting. Yarborough watched him coldly, then turned away with a shrug of his shoulders. "You contrive to be unnecessarily offensive," he remarked: and as if taking a sudden determination, walked over to the door and threw it open. "I will not detain you any longer, Mr. Savile," he said, with a ceremonious air.

Savile followed him down the stairs, and was presently shown into the street, Yarborough standing bareheaded as he passed out. He managed very adroitly to throw something of the air of an ejection over Savile's retirement from the field, as if he were a gaoler discharging a prisoner who had served his term, with a caution not to do it again. Savile

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paused half-way down the street, and looked back at Yarborough's windows with the expression of a man who knows that he has been cheated and doesn't like it, but sees no way of getting out of it.

"And the unique part of the thing is," he said aloud, with a mixture of wrath and humour, "that the whole place is mine, lock, stock, barrel, and clearing-rod. The fellow has had the impudence to turn me out of my own house—and it appears that he hasn't even paid his last quarter's rent!"

Yarborough's bachelor dinners, got up on the spur of the moment, with an artful appearance of artfulness, were already so well known and popular that he could generally count upon a good attendance at twelve hours' notice. He invited his guests, not to the dismal purlieus of St. Martin's Lane, but to a fashionable suite of rooms in a fashionable quarter, and the first floor of No. 27 Pierpont Street was a favorite rendezvous of observant politicians, vague diplomats, and resourceful gentlemen connected with the Press.

Artist or historian might have been glad to delineate the quintet of powerful heads gathered round his table at ten o'clock that night, dimly visible behind clouds of smoke. They were men of widely divergent types, vigorous faces, bearing the impress of exceptional forces: the principal link between them was their common interest in the Liberal cause. The place of honour at Yarborough's right hand was given to a little fair-haired man with sleepy eyes and a baby mouth, who walked up to the door carrying a

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badly rolled-up umbrella, and rid himself in the hall of a little pair of galoshes: this was Cecil Carteret, editor of the first Liberal journal of the day, and deeply versed in all party secrets. Opposite to him sat Lawrence Hammersley, who had held the War Office for a few months four years back, and looked forward to getting it again under the next Liberal ministry: a narrow, concentrated brow, raking dissatisfied eyes, an absent manner and a cold temper constituted his more salient characteristics. Next to Carteret Yarborough had placed George Mallinson, a man of exceedingly kindly, calm, and even temper, with a plain, honest face, and a big forehead queerly modelled by the calculating brain within: for in spite of his unassuming looks he was a man of great financial talent and capacity, and might have been Chancellor of the Exchequer before now, had his temper been less disinterested, less modest, less proud, or more ambitious. Facing him again sat the last of Yarborough's guests, florid and extravagant, as if he had just stepped off the stage of a French burlesque, with a heavy, sensual jaw and a light-blue dangerous eye, Royalist, Anarchist, wine-bibber, rake, and poet, but best known to fame as the editor of a great Parisian daily, aptly entitled *La Vie de Bohème*. He had fought a score of duels, not without killing his man; his body was crossed with scars as a map with rivers; and he had spent no inconsiderable portion of his life in prison for treason and rebellion, which in France is so much worse than the sin of witchcraft. He took his occasional incarcerations in excellent part, spoke of the Con-

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ciergerie as his country-house, and spent his enforced leisure in coining stinging epigrams against Right and Left with impartial zeal. Yet he had a footing in every Parisian salon, and was adored by the leaders of the high society: he was the idol of the mob: Paris went into mourning for his retirement: the least guileful of double-dealers, he clung to all lost and hopeless causes, and talked treason in the street with the touching good faith of a child. He passioned for liberty: oppression stifled him: he hated injustice as Yarborough hated a fool, or Carteret a drunkard. Yarborough said of him: "De Châtillon would guillotine an aristocracy, but he would not hurt a fly."

A shaded silver lamp made of the table a small island of light amid a sea of shadow: rich wines of Rheims and of Epernay sparkled with flakes of fire, and flung patches of tremulous hazel upon the white and purple skins of grapes, or the sunset bloom of peach and nectarine. The guests sat within the radius of this illumination, but Yarborough escaped: he was seated in a tall oaken chair at the head of the table, his delicate arrogant face luminously pale against its lofty carving. The scene was repeated with ghostly exactness in a long mirror which leaned from the opposite wall: portraits in carved frames hung on either side, so salient and lifelike that they, as well as the pale verisimilitude of the mirror, seemed to challenge comparison with the breathing life below. One was that of Yarborough's mother, a glorious head, richly tinted, moulded of noble earth: from the other frame looked down the pale,

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mocking, spiritual face of her outcast, exiled son. Yarborough knew that his conduct in giving a dinner-party on the very night of Edmund's ruin was likely to be interpreted as an act of callous indecency, and he was warily on the alert to remove this impression, imperceptibly marking the limits and indicating the issues of conversation, like a skilful general in an enemy's country.

"That is your brother, is it not?" Hammersley said, nodding towards the ambiguous portrait with a disagreeable smile.

"Yes," said Yarborough, taking up the challenge, "that is the man who is branded as a thief by our friends of the opposite party."

"Absent in body, present in spirit," suggested Hammersley. "I suppose he is out of England by now?"

"Thee should have got him to stay, friend Yarborough," said Carteret. He had been brought up a Quaker, as he was careful to explain, and though since the age of eighteen he had forsworn their profession his tongue retained some of their familiar tricks of dialect. "It would have been best for him in the long run. To be sure, thee had thy own reputation to think of, hadn't thee?"

"I don't think Edmund could have borne to stay," said Mallinson, the peace-maker. "He'd have been always fancying some one was trying to cut him."

De Châtillon burst out laughing, and leaned back in his chair to wink at his host behind Hammersley's back. He alone of the quartet was avowedly Yarborough's ally: Mallinson was in a state of charita-

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ble distress, Carteret neutral, Hammersley delighted to get a chance of annoying somebody. All this Yarborough plainly saw, and it amused and flattered, but did not provoke him. Like the great Repeal Minister, he rarely lost his temper except with his own allies.

"For Heaven's sake let us talk of something more interesting," he said brusquely. "Edmund is gone, and you know the old proverb about spilled milk. I, personally, am by no means prepared to weep."

"There we believe you," said Hammersley. "You certainly bear it uncommonly well."

"I've a great admiration for fortitude," said Carteret dryly. "It's a useful virtue."

"I wonder how long Lord Hayes will stick to his guns," said Mallinson, making a desperate effort to change the conversation. "I suppose we should be sure of a majority at the polls."

"He won't go till he's obliged," said Hammersley. "He is—er—fond of office."

"Not fonder of it than most men," pleaded Mallinson. "We all like it when we can get it, I suppose."

"Some of us don't," said Carteret, with a twinkle in his gray eyes. "Thee don't thyself, George Mallinson: thee runs away from it. Jocelyn Hayes," he added, looking at Hammersley with an air of indisputable authority, "is a very disinterested man: he has kept his hands clean through nine years of power, and it isn't every one that can say as much."

Hammersley shrugged his shoulders with a pronounced sneer. "He has the Privy Seal," he remarked. "I merely intimated that I didn't sup-

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pose he wanted to give it up. Who would want to give up the Privy Seal, if they were lucky enough to hold it? I appeal to our host. I'm sure he wouldn't—would you?"

"No: I should take all the power I could get, and keep what I had taken."

"Wise man!" said Hammersley. "You're frank, too: I like people to be frank—it saves a lot of trouble."

"Why do you always abuse yourself, Yarborough?" said Mallinson, half angry and half pained.

"Because I think it is in better taste than to be always abusing other people," said Yarborough, his suave rich tones blended with a strong infusion of irony. "I appeal to Mr. Hammersley: I'm sure he thinks so too—don't you?"

There was a somewhat awkward pause, filled up again by De Châtillon's resonant laughter. "Dame! I think you two might very well cry quits," he said. "You have both been very rude, gentlemen, and—voilà! why should you not be very polite? It would make a change."

Yarborough turned towards Hammersley with a smile which was irresistibly winning. "M. de Châtillon is a fount of good temper and good sense," he said. "Mr. Hammersley, I freely acknowledge that I was rude. Shall we cry quits?"

"Of course, if you like to throw your brother overboard, it is no business of mine," said Hammersley. Carteret, who was peering through his spectacles alternately at his vis-à-vis and at his host, assented to this laudable sentiment with a

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small fatherly nod. "But for decency's sake, at least."

"You expected me to go into mourning?"

"No, I'll be damned if I did!" Hammersley rapped out. "I'm too old for that."

"I beg your pardon; you didn't expect it because you are one of those delightfully cynical people who pride themselves on holding the mirror up to nature, before their own faces. At least, if you didn't expect it, you considered it the proper thing for me to do. I did not. Shall I tell you why?"

"Good, he is going to lie," De Châtillon murmured inaudibly, brushing away the words with his handkerchief. "Now then, we will see what this little Iarbrou has to say for himself."

Mallinson, less suspicious, looked up and smiled. "Why should you bother to explain?" he said. "We don't think you callous. We were puzzled, that's all. We believe every word you say."

"Speak for yourself," said Yarborough dryly. "I do not think Mr. Hammersley is disposed to be very credulous. His large-hearted and sympathetic nature revolts in disgust because, instead of sharing my brother's exile, I stay in London and entertain my friends. But what would you think of the soldier who, on the eve of battle, turned back to bury his dead? Edmund is, politically speaking, dead: and we are on the eve of a great battle, I hope a great victory. Lord Hayes will scarcely hold office for another week."

"How do you know that?" asked Hammersley the sceptic.

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"They will be forced to resign by finding themselves in a minority. Their nominal majority, as you know, is only twenty-three, and it's not as sound as Lord Ferdinand fancies. I could name more than a dozen who will come over."

"And how might thee know that?" asked Carteret.

"Oh, does one require to be a prophet to foretell so much as that? Really, Carteret, one would think it was not you who wrote the article which exposed that famous treaty, and incidentally signed Edmund's political death-warrant. You said yourself that it would touch our commerce, did you not? Very well! Since when has the Anglo-Saxon been such a fool as to let himself be out of pocket on a question of conscience? They will rat, of course."

"If those are your principles, I shall rat myself at the first opportunity," said Mallinson smiling.

"Principles? He hasn't got any," grumbled Carteret. "Friend Christian, my lad, I see plainly that thee art destined to occupy a high position one of these days—about as high as Haman's."

"And with such a stake as that to play for, you expect me to go into mourning for decency's sake? Thanks! One can pay too high for decency. Besides, my exalted sense of patriotism forbids me to desert at such a critical hour."

"Hadh't you better keep that for your electioneering placards?" sneered Hammersley.

"No, I prefer to rely upon personal popularity," said Yarborough suavely, "when I want a safe and simple way of fooling my electors. Are you

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thinking of coming back to Parliament, Mr. Hammersley.

Hammersley was peeling a walnut, and did not answer for a moment. "I can't tell if I shall stand or not," he replied, in an expressionless tone. "It depends upon circumstances."

Yarborough's and Mallinson's eyes met, and they exchanged a look full of understanding. Hammersley's circumstances might have been resolved into a single question: he was a poor man, and bitterly unpopular in his own neighbourhood, and he was not likely to commit himself unless he had a definite prospect of winning his seat.

"This will be a check to young Savile's ambition," said Mallinson. "He has got on very well so far. Wonderfully well for his years, we should have said in my day: but all the great men are young now, except Lord Hayes and me."

"The country wants men," said Yarborough: "it has ceased to make a fetich of gout and gray hairs."

"Pitt was prime-minister at twenty-four," said Hammersley, recurring to his disagreeable sneer. "Perhaps you hope to tread in his steps?"

Yarborough turned and tilted back his head, looking at him side-ways from under dropped lashes: the whole pose was an incarnation of indolent and rather haughty irony. "When I am premier, Mr. Hammersley," he said, "I'll give you the War Office."

It was decidedly a peculiar and pregnant moment. No one knew exactly what Hammersley would do,

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but all felt that he would resent the equivocal impertinence of such a promise, doubly stinging because Hammersley's last and only experience of the War Office had left him a disappointed man, notoriously difficult to work with, and therefore unlikely to succeed. What happened was, of course, just what no one expected. Hammersley's eyes dropped before the arrogant glance, and he sat dumb. Mallinson, least worldly of men, fancied that he was touched with sympathy for Yarborough's generous youth: Carteret, more suspicious, wondered if Yarborough had managed to get him in some way into his power: De Châtillon laughed under his breath and muttered, "Richard's himself again." The Frondeur was right, for Yarborough had won simply by self-revelation, a weapon oddly potent in his hands, but apt to leave him, as now, whiter and less lifelike than the portraits between which his image was reflected.

An interchange of glances passed between Carteret and De Châtillon: then, leaning forward, they began to talk in the whispered French of old friends. Hammersley sat silent, neither speaking nor listening, occupied with his own thoughts, which probably he did not find pleasant company. Mallinson got up and came to Yarborough's side.

"You look dead tired," he said gently. "You've been working too hard, and I don't believe you get enough sleep. Don't overdo yourself: it's a capital mistake."

"What paternal care!" said Yarborough, at once amused and touched. "I'm not going to."

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"Mind you don't, then," said Mallinson. "Well, I must be off: I keep early hours, and it's past twelve already. Good-night."

His departure broke up the party. Within half an hour Yarborough's guests, with the exception of De Châtillon, who was returning to Paris next day, were dispersed to their several dwellings: Carteret, the last to go, wringing Yarborough's fingers and wishing him "Good-night, friend," with a long-suffering smile. Yarborough stood for a moment watching him, as he strolled down the street, with a musing, almost wistful look: when he turned from the closed door, he found himself the object of De Châtillon's closest scrutiny. He laughed to himself.

"Come into my study: I never sit in that room."

"It has ghosts for you, I suppose. Thanks, mon ami."

De Châtillon followed him into a smaller room, heavily curtained, furnished with many bookshelves, and lit by the mellow glow of a shaded lamp. "You keep late hours, then?"

"Late? I keep no hours at all. Some day I'll take you round and show you my other rooms, where I work. No one knows of them except my landlord, not even my valet Mornington, who believes himself to be confidential. He thinks he does, and is sufficiently flattered by my confidence to guard it like death from the other servants. I like playing off fools against one another."

"You prefer to make a mystery, even when there is no secret: that is adorable in a woman, but in a man it is tiresome."

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"I make no mystery. I hold my tongue and the mystery is made for me. Besides, I must have a place where I can be alone. You know that feeling?"

"I have felt it in prison," said the Frondeur, with a grimace. "But, Iarbrou, say now: how will it go?"

"With Savile and his men?" Yarborough stood by the mantel-piece, propping his deep brows upon his hand: his voice, which he suffered now to fall into its natural inflections, was rich, flexible, and clear as steel. "I think they'll have to go. It was a simply marvellous piece of luck, Carteret getting hold of that treaty. I believe they were actually going to produce papers in a few months' time."

"You believe? You know a ver' great deal. Who tells you these things?"

"Naturally I take care to be well informed upon all such minor details. Since I can't heal the lepers or raise the dead, I find the next best way to advertise my genius is to display a superior knowledge of significant trifles."

"Any young child can be profane: it is ver' easy and cheap. And when they do go out?"

"Then—why, then I shall still play jackal to Wemyss's lion," Yarborough answered, in a tone of singular irony. "Age and experience are preferred before capacity and impudence by this wonderful Constitution of ours, which makes a man a hereditary legislator because his great-great-grandmother wheedled a title out of Charles II."

"But, my faith! one pities the lion that is served by such a jackal!" said De Châtillon dryly. "Chris-

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tian, my friend, learn that if you fail it will not be from excess of modesty."

"Modesty? The excuse which cowards make for not doing what they daren't do."

"Allow me to observe that for a true philosopher monsieur is somewhat dogmatic. But tell me now, how did you persuade Monsieur Hammersley to grace your table?"

"I was brought into contact with him when he held the War Office. I was young then, and almost unknown: and I made a speech in his defence one night when he was hard pressed in debate. The fool had omitted to get up his facts: I had foreseen the attack, and was armed with every conceivable authority, and all manner of statistics. That made a keen impression on him, which I have worked up since by the aid of a little judicious flattery. But he is an intolerable nuisance with his barbed, awkward speeches: I knew I should have to read him a lesson some day, as I did to-night. I don't think he will ask after Edmund again with any *arrière-pensée*."

"And my friend, the little Carteret?"

"Personal attraction. He likes me, and I puzzle him."

"And Monsieur Mallinson?"

"What a catechism! I was at Oxford with his favourite nephew, a well-meaning but rather weak young man, who imagined he could beat me at billiards. I got him into a scrape, and then got him out of it. He recognised my hand in the second transaction, but not in the first. Then I worked

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him up into a proper state of remorse, got him to confess the whole affair to his charitable uncle, and so earned Mallinson's undying gratitude."

"Diable!" said Constant, after a pause: "this is not a very agreeable anecdote that you have just related, my friend."

"Oh, go to bed," said Yarborough, laughing. "You must be half asleep if you take all these fables for truth. You asked me questions, and I answered them: well, was there any harm in that? If you had asked no questions—"

"But were they lies?" asked De Châtillon doubtfully.

"Lies assuredly, invented to shock one who I had fancied could not be shocked. All the same, I think you expect too much from me. Self is my watchword: my ambition is purely personal. I care not a straw for country, party, friends, or even kindred, provided I can laureate my own brows and line my own pockets. You shouldn't forget these little facts."

And he held the door open for Constant de Châtillon to go to his room.

IV

FLOWER O' THE PEACH

A WEEK later, the Liberal papers rang with a shout of triumph. Wemyss, the leader of the Opposition, introduced a vote of want of confidence, and carried it by a bare majority, it is true, but still by a majority. Lord Hayes dissolved Parliament, and the Conservatives appealed to the country.

For nine years Lord Hayes and Mainwaring Savile's aristocratic uncle had held undisputed sway, while their enemies, under the ineffectual leadership of Randolph Wemyss, a man so completely neglected by public acknowledgment that people had never given up speaking of him as Mr. Wemyss, wasted their strength in spasmodic vituperation, or in clever catchwords, those will-o'-the-wisps that dance so brightly over the quagmire of political sloth. The Liberals were in fact without a leader: the party was disorganised and rent by jealousies and factions, and though there was plenty of intellect in their ranks they had not a single adherent of sufficient force of character or purity of aim to drive that restive team, to impose discipline upon those heterogeneous forces. "The mediocre Mr. Randolph Wemyss," as he was called by the free-lances even of his own party, contented himself with boring the

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House at periodical intervals, while the Conservatives sped unchecked on their triumphal progress.

And now the end had come in a moment, like thunder out of a clear sky. It was all very well to talk of appealing to the country; it looked well in news-sheets or on electioneering posters; but in their secret councils it was admitted that the country, which usually oscillates with the regularity of a pendulum from one set of promise-breakers to the other, felt that it had done enough for the Conservatives, and had no intention of giving them a third lease of office. Lord Hayes took his position very philosophically, and declared that as soon as the results of the general election were known, he meant to go into Essex and turn his attention to the breeding of mules, geese and pigs: and he contrived to imply, in a delicately indefinite way, that he expected his political experience to be of service to him in these agricultural pursuits. He had been very much annoyed by the affair of the treaty. Brusque and aristocratic, he had always had his own way with his suave colleague at the Foreign Office, and together they kept the journalists at bay: but that inscrutable shrine had been violated by Christian Yarborough's scandalous *coup*, the riddle of the Sphinx was told to all the world, the policy of ministers was exposed to criticism and caricature, and, what was worse, Lord Hayes found himself very nearly entangled in a European war with a justly outraged and highly indignant power. Edmund Yarborough was sacrificed without one pang of remorse, and might think himself lucky to have got off so cheaply: no one

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supposed that he had committed any crime beyond that of being unlucky, but his disgrace did very well as a pledge of good faith to the contracting party. By such means war was averted, but the negotiations were broken off: indeed, English public opinion would scarcely have allowed them to proceed. The premier shrugged his shoulders but kept his temper. Lord Ferdinand was unable to imitate his *sang-froid*: he was an odd mixture of sensitiveness and vanity, spoke of his electors as "the mob," and acknowledged no man as a gentleman unless he could show his sixteen quarterings. In appearance he was almost as tall as his nephew, but of slender and elegant physique: a fine-lipped, blond-haired Saxon, graceful in dress and manners, but with the features of an ascetic. And, like many another haughty general, Lord Ferdinand underestimated the strength of his foe; a nine-years' run of power had made him forget that England is after all a democracy. He looked upon the warfare of politics as a duel, or at most a tourney of nobles, and refused to believe that belted knights could be tumbled from their saddles by an attack of the Lincoln Green. What puzzled him most was the spirit of discipline which marked the Liberal attack, and the knack of saying the right thing and sticking to it suddenly displayed by Mr. Wemyss: and on the morning after the dissolution he let his breakfast get cold while he explained to his nephew his conviction that his downfall must be attributed to the diabolical manœuvres of an unknown personal enemy. Savile went on stirring his coffee with a bored expression

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which annoyed Lord Ferdinand, who felt that he had hit upon a new and happy theory.

"I cannot understand it, Mainwaring: I cannot, indeed. It is quite inexplicable to me. Some one must be at the back of it, you know: nothing will ever make me believe that Randolph Wemyss composed his own speech last night."

"He has a private secretary, you know," Savile permitted himself to say.

Lord Ferdinand shook his head. "So Hayes says: in fact, he is quite bewitched by the fellow and prophesies great things for him. But not yet—he is too young. The country prefers gray hairs and ripe experience."

"Yes, when it is ripe," said Savile laconically. "Better is a wise child than an old and foolish king."

"Young men never have any judgment," said Lord Ferdinand, stung by a fancied personal application.

"He is over thirty, and awfully clever: knows how to make himself annoying, too. Dark horse, you know, and all that."

"My dear Mainwaring, I wish you would speak more correctly. Few things are of such importance as the formation of a truly elegant and cultivated style. May I ask you what you mean by a 'dark horse'?"

"Come, sir, you aren't on the Bench," Savile said, half laughing and half impatient. His chivalry was extended to all women and a few men: he had none to spare for Edmund Yarborough, but with Lord

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Ferdinand he was always gentle and considerate. "I mean that I wouldn't trust him farther than I could see him: I've had one or two pretty sharp skirmishes with him already, and I've a notion that we may come to a fight, one of these days. I'd like to try conclusions with him, and that's a fact."

"Surely not in the physical arena?" said Lord Ferdinand, raising his pencilled eyebrows. "He is only about five feet high, I believe."

Lord Ferdinand, like his nephew, was over six feet in height, and had no opinion of small men, despite the evidence of history.

"As a matter of fact, I believe he stands five feet seven in his socks: but intellectually he's a Colossus. He gets up all Wemyss's speeches for him, and it's queer to watch his face when Wemyss is on his legs. I'd back him to be at the bottom of any mischief that's going."

"But he could have had nothing to do with the theft of the treaty," objected Lord Ferdinand. "Recollect that it led to his brother's disgrace."

Savile smiled grimly, and shook his head. "As to that, I can't say, sir," he answered. "But this I'd swear to—if it weren't for him, the Opposition would simply collapse like a paper bag."

Lord Ferdinand sniffed, and changed the subject: he had a healthy British dislike to all proposals or explanations which did not emanate from himself. And Savile abandoned it gladly, conscious of a temptation to say more than he ought.

Meanwhile Yarborough himself was working harder than a day-labourer or a mill-hand at his un-

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grateful task. Amid the press of petty duties which crowd the hours of the private secretary to a premier designate, he had also his own deeper studies and more absorbing problems. His days he spent in public business, in interviewing editors and pressmen, or in drilling his timorous chief, who was horrified to find himself once more a man of whom much was expected, and who showed a strong desire to recalcitrate the whole affair and flee for peace into the Chiltern Hundreds: and by night he gave himself, with blood at fever-heat, to the study of foreign and constitutional history, annotating, comparing, extracting, revising, compiling till his veins tingled with electric fire, and the wearied brain peopled the dark with sparkling pictures, vivid as the dreams of delirium.

With all his toil and vigils, he grew neither sick nor nervous, abstained from all appearance of hurry, and spent his few leisure moments in thinking out a plan of campaign for the coming election. He had entered the House as member for Staines, and his reelection had never been opposed, for the Yarboroughs were great people by tradition in that division of the county, and popular from of old with the keen-eyed traders and seafaring community of that dark and sunny city by the sea. Now it appeared that Hammersley wanted a seat, and as he was not the sort of man to fight his way in against opposition, Yarborough felt that it would be a graceful and politic act to resign in his favour, and win him an easy triumph by the aid of the Yarborough interest. As for himself, he had a plan in view which offered a

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toss-up between disaster and glory: and his mood was not one to admit the chance of failure, except to add piquancy to the flavour of success.

A few days after the dissolution, while still undecided, he went out an hour before sunset to stretch his legs and get a breath of air, and sought his favourite haunt, the busy Strand. Against the bluebell sky of June, enriched with evening gold, the tall crooked buildings stood carved out of shadow: the City throbbed with eternal inquietude and transitory energy: the churches of St. Mary and St. Clement, islanded between dividing streams of traffic, lifted their slender spires into the brilliance of sunset, as if protesting, by their own immutable and golden calm against the fever-fret of men toiling below for the gold that perisheth. He walked as far as Ludgate Circus, and there paused, at the shelter in the middle of New Bridge Street, to watch the changes of that teeming arena. A cloud of sunlit smoke hung over the dark bridge where the trains crawled incessant, drowning the roar of London in the hollow clangour and thunder of labouring iron and steel: every averted arch or doorway stood black, like a pit of shadow against the flood of daffodil light. A policeman, England's only autocrat, stood sun-bathed in the road before the shelter: and as a Charing Cross omnibus emerged from under the railway, he stepped forward, and with a single gesture of his hand waved it back to let a procession of cabs and vans go through to the Embankment. Yarborough admired the ease and power of that daily marvel of London life: but before he had done wondering at it

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he saw it had been misinterpreted. A girl who had been standing unnoticed on the shelter at his side misunderstood the signal, and stepped from the shelter into the roadway, intending to cross and go up Ludgate Hill. Then finding herself within a couple of yards of a great empty furniture-van, drawn by a pair of horses and going at a pace accelerated by the long slope of Farringdon Street, she did the most foolish thing in the world: looked blankly up at them and stood still.

"Out of the way there!" shouted the driver, clutching at his reins.

"Now then, miss!" cried the policeman in the same breath.

"Go on!" and "Come back!" men called to her from the pavement, but it was all done in a flash: the powerful horses were upon her when Yarborough stepped forward to save her. He put his arm about her waist and with his free hand caught the reins and arrested the stumbling brutes: then lifted her from under their very hoofs, and swung her across into safety. As he sprang after her, the horses plunged forward: the off wheel grazed his shoulder and soiled his coat. Staggering from the blow he got her up on the pavement, and the multitude of fixed faces and avid eyes turned away cheated of a sensation. Most thanked God that they had been spared the sight of one of London's common tragedies, while the policeman, recognising Yarborough, touched his helmet and remarked that it was a smart little bit of work. Yarborough made no answer; he had eyes only for the girl he had rescued.

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Her frock was a fashionable but shabby walking-dress of a soft brown material, fastened at the waist with a ribbon of gold: her hat was a Tuscan straw, odd and simple and pretty, and worn at an angle truly French. She was rather above middle height, with a quantity of nut-brown hair, and a pale, irregular face marked by a virginal freshness of outlook which recalled to him one of Andrea's early, gold-cirqued Madonnas. But her hazel eyes were freaked with elusive green and gray, and her thin lips had a queer humourous twist, as if she came of a good fighting stock, and had inherited from her ancestors a mocking wit as well as a Puritan temper. Yarrowborough liked also the straight thin line of her shoulders, and the youthful curve of her figure, the bend of her waist, and that particular and indefinable charm, rare and pure and yet ambiguous, which, like a sunny atmosphere, seemed essential to her being.

"I ought to thank you very much: but, how does one say 'Thank you' for having one's life saved?"

"Best, I think, by saying nothing about it," Yarrowborough answered, almost brusquely.

"But I am very grateful, really. It was stupid of me: I was thinking of something else."

"Even when those brutes were upon you?"

"Please don't put it down to courage," she said, shaking her head, "it was purely absence of mind."

"It argues a good deal of coolness, however," Yarrowborough answered; and added, yielding to an unconventional impulse, "I should think you were not much afraid of death."

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She let her eyes, clear and reticent as a diamond, rest on his face for a moment, and he was conscious of spiritual contact with an actual living force which he had hitherto eliminated from his scheme of a rational universe. "No, I am not," she said. "Why should I be?"

"Most people are," said Yarborough.

"You are not, or you wouldn't have risked your life for a stranger. But I am not quite a stranger really, though we have never met. Are you not Mr. Christian Yarborough?"

Yarborough bent his head.

"My name is Margaret Carew. I'm staying with the Carews in Grandison Square, and I've often heard my cousin Althea speak of you."

"I have the honour of knowing Mrs. Carew, so we may consider ourselves introduced, mayn't we?"

"I think so. Now do you mind pointing out to me which 'bus I ought to take? I like the City, but I don't understand it very well."

"They are all rather crowded. Wouldn't you rather—?"

"I'd rather walk, but I'm too late, and I can't afford a hansom. I'm only a poor relation, you know, only Althea never lets me find it out. I wish I could thank you the way you deserve."

"I shall come and ask how you are after your adventure, Miss Carew."

"I wanted to ask you, but I dared not, you must be so very busy." This she said as she sprang upon the foot-board of the omnibus. "Good-bye: don't forget." She looked back once, smiling and bend-

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ing her head, and then he could only watch her as she ran up the winding stair.

When he had watched her out of sight, he returned to his old house in Bexton Street, and sat down by the broad window of the upper room, which overlooked the alley blackened by twilight. Indeed, he had plenty to think about, for his very universe stood in need of readjustment, while his house of life, whose architecture had been planned and carried out from childhood in unbroken unity, threatened to come tumbling about his ears like a pack of cards. His old view of faith had been that it was a product of priestly juggling, mercenary credulity, and the trickery of the senses: as to women, he had regarded them as so many wooden dolls, except here and there one sufficiently distinguished, by wit or by looks, to be classed, together with snapping dogs, martyred missionaries, and despotic monarchs, as an active nuisance. This was an odd point of view for a man of Yarborough's years, but surely not unique: for if such was not the theory of the distinguished author of *Vivian Grey*, it is difficult to see what notion he can have held. Margaret Carew, however, refused to fit into the frames of any of Yarborough's imaginary portraits: he could classify her neither as plain and dull, nor as pretty and pestilent, nor as illogical and hysterical, nor could he ever set her down, with that facile sneer which is the last word of the malicious, as a young lady who wanted to be attractive. She stood beyond the pale of his definitions, a fresh, calm creature leavened with wholesome satire, and tenfold more attractive because she

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remained persistently in a world of her own, looking down at Yarborough with a friendly but analytical interest. Yarborough got up, finding the picture too vivid, but he was overpowered by an extraordinary rush of sensations: he stretched out his arms and took her into an embrace which should have been an epitome of heaven:—but as he stooped to kiss her she melted into sea-foam under his hands, and he came back to reality, and stood trembling, shaken by the ebb of a passion for which late hours and overwork perhaps were partly responsible. So, at least, he told himself, and resolved to take more care of his health in the future: also he had some idea of never going near Althea Carew's house again, but the very contemplation of the resolution seemed to absolve him from the necessity of making it; besides, he had passed his word and could not break it. His final determination, therefore, was to go to Grandison Square the very next day: but the last thing he saw before falling asleep was his brother Edmund's face, pale and with a look of reproach.

V

IN GRANDISON SQUARE

“ALTHEA,” said Margaret Carew, coming into the softly lighted, rose-tinted drawing-room where her cousin sat waiting for an exceedingly late dinner, “Althea, listen: I’ve had an adventure.”

“Darling, have you? but it doesn’t matter at all about your not coming in in time, for Frederic isn’t back yet, and I’m so hungry, only I don’t think it’s nice for you to be walking about by yourself at this time of night—do you?”

Althea was a slender little matron with blue appealing eyes, who did her golden hair in soft puffs and got her gowns from Paris and her grammar from nowhere in particular; but no one had the heart to be provoked by those soft rambling incoherencies, uttered in the plaintive cooing tones of a distressed dove. Margaret came and sat down in a rocking-chair; she had exchanged her walking-dress for an Empire gown of black chiffon, through which glanced the moonlight of silver threads, while Althea was radiant in laces and jewels and a flow of creamy silk.

“I had an adventure,” she repeated solemnly, “with a young man.”

“My *dearest* girl!—I always said you had wonder-

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ful eyes, though. I hope it wasn't too frightfully shocking?"

"A young man of great personal attractions," said Margaret pensively sticking out the toe of her slipper and studying it: "Dear me, I think I've got a hole in my stocking; I must remember to darn it to-night. A young man of first-rate abilities: I should think it would be quite educating to talk to him."

"Oh bother, nobody wants to be educated now," said Althea impatiently. "Do go on!"

"Young, handsome, clever, aristocratic *and* rich," proceeded Margaret equably. "And he saved my life."

Althea uttered a slight scream, and leaned forward eager-eyed, fluttering her fan quite fast while Margaret gravely sketched the evening's episode. "My dear Peggy," said the little lady, when it was done, "how intensely romantic! Of course he'll come and call. The Yarboroughs are of excellent family—not that it matters nowadays in a public man—and, besides, Frederic says his position is something simply astonishing, considering how old he is. I'm glad he isn't a labour member, though," she added thoughtfully, "because the in-laws might turn out so dreadfully horrible."

"What should you think," Margaret asked, pushing up into the waves of her hair one of those hair-pins, miscalled invisible, by whose aid untidy people try to tuck up straying locks, "would be best for me to be married in? Gray is always satisfactory to go away in and besides it does for anything after-

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wards; but white—and particularly white satin—is simply too trying for words.”

“Oh my dear, pray don’t take up any of your queer notions upon that subject,” said Althea, hastily. “I think I should die of mortification if you were to do like that dreadful step-daughter of poor Lucy Avery’s did, who married old Mr. Isaacs the pawnbroker, and insisted on being married in twelve different colors to represent the twelve tribes of Judah. So foolish and unkind of her, too, because the poor old gentleman always spelled it Ysaque himself and pretended he was a Canadian Huguenot, only nobody would believe him on account of his nose—although they say she only took him because Lucy made her, which I can quite believe, for Lucy had the most fr-rightful temper, so perhaps she was more to be pitied than blamed, poor dear!”

“Well,” said Margaret, in a considering tone, “perhaps we might make it white satin, veiled in net or lace or something. As for bridesmaids, I suppose perhaps he would want to have some of his own relations; what do you think?”

“I don’t know whether he’s got any,” said Althea doubtfully, “and anyhow we should have to make sure they weren’t too plain—or too pretty,” she added soberly; “that would be worse still.”

“I’ll ask him when I see him whether he has any pretty sisters not quite as pretty as I am,” said Margaret: “will that do?”

Althea looked at her sharply. “You’re laughing, Margaret,” she said. “I don’t think it’s quite nice of you to make a jest of serious subjects.”

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"I beg your pardon, but you *are* in rather a hurry to get rid of me, you know. I could see by the frown on your forehead that you were wondering how much you would be able to save out of the housekeeping for a wedding-present. Were you deciding on silver sugar-tongs or a standard lamp?"

"I should give you something nicer than that, I hope, my dear," answered Althea with a smile. "And I'm not at all anxious to get rid of you, as you know perfectly well: only I should like to see you happily married. Girls always think they'll be just as happy if they never marry, but it's a great mistake. Home is a woman's sphere, and besides husbands are no trouble if they're properly managed."

"It sounds like a patent stove," murmured Margaret.

"Besides, they're so convenient to take you about," Althea pursued unheeding. "And then they're so sweet—oh, men are ever so much nicer than women, I think. Nicer in the house, you know—easier to get on with, and all that."

"Unless they drink."

"*Margaret!* They don't: not in our position in life."

"Occasionally they do, you know," said Margaret. "And occasionally they get into the divorce court. Or they flirt, or gamble, or grumble, or live in the country and devote themselves to sport."

"I thought you were so fond of riding?" said Althea helplessly.

"So I am," returned Margaret composedly: "but not in pursuit of a fox, or a hare, or a red herring,

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or a tame stag that tries to fraternise with the hounds."

"I don't believe hunting's cruel," said Althea. "Frederic knows lots of hunting-men, and they all say the fox enjoys it, and they ought to know: besides, all the clergy used to hunt once."

"And afterwards they performed the services in top-boots and riding-breeches," said Margaret, "so of course it can't be cruel. Besides, very often they don't kill the hares and things at all: they save them up and make them last for years. That's because we're such a humane nation."

"No, I think it's in case of running short," said the literal Althea. "But anyhow, I'm sure Mainwaring Savile wouldn't do anything cruel."

Margaret looked for a moment as if she were not quite so sure of that, but she only answered rather dryly, "Mr. Savile only hunts big game."

"You sha'n't say horrid things about Mainwaring Savile, Peggy: I won't have it. He's one of my most particular favourites, and you're *not* to do it."

Margaret gave the required promise, rocking rhythmically with her eyes shut. As an amateur student of character, she was quite sure that Savile was not, and would not for the world have become, the guileless English gentleman of Althea's charitable fancy: she saw capacities of nobility and brutality springing side by side in that strong and complex organism, but she preferred to keep her knowledge to herself. In her own mind these dual qualities were so entwined and bound together as to leave room for a clear judgment, but in Althea's

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one or the other must inevitably have predominated, and borne fruit in injustice. Margaret, therefore, held her tongue, and contented herself with the satisfaction of always feeling, and occasionally allowing herself to look, provokingly diplomatic. This, of course, the Madonna of Yarborough's dreams had no business to do: but indeed Margaret was very human, and had not the slightest idea of fitting herself for a shrine.

Their talk was closed by the entrance of Frederic, Althea's cousin and husband, who came in grumbling at the lateness of the hour: he was something indefinite in the Home Office, and had been detained by a press of work. He was a small, neat man with dark eyes and a dark mustache, said to have nothing clever about him but his manner, which was finished but disagreeable: so much so, indeed, that conversations were apt, as now, to wither at his approach. It was through him that Althea and Margaret had made Savile's acquaintance, for which fact Margaret owed him a debt of gratitude, for Savile was reckoned almost first among her few friends. Carew liked Margaret, over whom he had a sense of power, because she was poor and accepted presents from his wife: he also admired his wife immensely, although he did not scruple to tell her she was an idiot. He had no great virtues or vices, but practised in their stead a code of respectable morality and a quantity of shabby faults. He kept, for example, a tight hand on his purse, and worked out his accounts in farthings: he found fault with the fit and fashion of Althea's clothes, and

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vowed he would not go out with her unless she dressed better, yet sulked for a week after paying her bills: on the other hand he had a horror of debt, and paid ready money for everything, perhaps because his father had gone bankrupt before he was old enough to understand that a man who has paid his creditors a shilling in the pound may make a second fortune with a clear conscience, and yet not be a thief. His chief drawback, from Althea's point of view, consisted in a conviction, of which she had never been able to break him, that he was a more competent cook than the French *chef* who governed his kitchen: it followed that he was in the habit of sending down recipes for curries, and gratuitous advice on the subject of hanging game, which were taken as a deadly insult and met by a threat of notice on the spot.

To-night, however, the dinner was satisfactory, and the various courses passed without remark, and he was in a very good temper when, after a single glass of wine (for he was very abstemious), he followed the ladies into the drawing-room and took up his position on the hearth-rug. He praised Margaret's black dress, telling her that it suited her colouring, which was pale, and her figure, which indeed no dress could spoil. "Besides," he added, "it's a nice, quiet little frock: very suitable indeed for a girl in your position, my dear."

Margaret lifted her eyes, mischievously calm and placid as a cat's which is only too lazy to scratch, but she was spared the trouble of finding a reply by Althea, who interposed hastily:

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“Now that just shows how much men know about dress! Why, I gave Margaret that frock myself: it came straight from Paris, and cost thirty guineas at the very least!”

Carew puckered his smooth forehead into a little frown. “That seems a lot of money to spend on a frock which you’ll get torn to pieces at the first dance you go to.”

“It will be my best gown all the summer,” said Margaret, apologetically, disarmed by the change of venue. “Althea was very kind: she bought it as a birthday surprise, and never said a word about it till it came.”

“Well, I know it would be long enough before I gave thirty guineas for a coat: but you women are all alike — never happy unless you’re spending money. I mean to take Althea out of town when the sales are on, it’s the only way of keeping her within bounds.”

“Nonsense, Frederic, you know nothing about it. You ought to be ashamed to talk like that!” And Althea frowned and nodded at her husband, to intimate to him that such sentiments, expressed in such a context, were likely to make Margaret uncomfortable. These signals, of course, were all made with the greatest secrecy: equally of course, Margaret did not miss one of them, and affected total blindness. She got up and crossed to the window, whence she could see the trees of the square lifting their great leafy branches, like clouds of immovable darkness, against the softer dark of the sky burning with summer stars. Grandison Square was a very

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quiet place; a hush of aristocratic seclusion brooded over its narrow limits, rarely broken except by the jingle of bells or clatter of trampling horses. But it was closely girdled by the splendour of working London, by the murmur of the eternal labourers' hymn, with all its voices, all its warrior-harmonies, all cries of human irony and melancholy with the roll of funeral drums and the sombre figure of toil not without hope. The figures of Frederic and Althea, and the meagre outline of Grandison Square, dwindled behind her into their proper insignificance, into the half-light of the commonplace. She saw the great slandered city, illuminating leagues of cloud-land with the reflection of its labourious lamps, miscalled ugly, very patient: a type of the great mother-country, railed at by her sons, yet patiently nourishing them at her bosom: a type of patient dumb humanity all the world over, slandered by preachers of half-truths, who cry, "All men are liars," and forget to say, "Ye are gods." Her nature responded to the touch of unknown forces, which took concrete form and came before her in the likeness of men who lived and fought in the world: Yarborough, cynically at odds with destiny: Savile, equitable and cold and strong. Either could give, to whatever woman he chose, the vital gift of freedom in service. A strange sensation came to Margaret as she listened to the night-song of London: she seemed to stand between them, offered her choice of their lives, and to stand uncertain which was the hireling and which was the true unselfish servant of men. This experience faded as it had come: she looked over her

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shoulder into the warm lighted room, gave herself a little shake, and was back in a moment in the safety of the commonplace, and somewhat amused at herself. School-girls only, she thought, may be forgiven for looking at every man they meet in the light of possible hymeneal tapers; she was out of her teens, and told herself prosaically that she was a fool. Such moods were rare with her: she wondered what influence it was that had turned her to-night into an unfamiliar Margaret. She had many of those rough, vivid, earthly qualities which are more often found in men than in women, but her will was to be spiritual and calm and clear. Narrow as her life was under Frederic Carew's petty tyranny, she rarely rebelled against it. It seemed as if her encounter with Yarborough had acted as the completion of an electric circuit, kindling wild sparks in saint and worldling; and each, in their infinitely different ways, shrank from the fiery contact.

VI

THE CHARLATAN

YARBOROUGH got up the next morning in a temper of serene exhilaration, the light of war sparkling in his eyes. Two pieces of business lay before him, both risky and both fascinating: the second, whose course he had not yet precisely determined, was to lie between him and Margaret: the first, for which he only lacked a pretext, was to be a duel with Carteret. *Life* itself, that most discreet and most astute of journals, lay upon his breakfast-table, and he picked it up and studied its columns over a frugal meal of coffee and eggs, in search of some chance sneer or bitter phrase which might be supposed to have wounded his feelings. He found all and more than he wanted in a leading article, where his own character and pretensions were discussed and dismissed in a flow of smooth neat prose, dainty as an essay of Addison but not so amiable, such as Carteret alone could have written. It was so clever and disagreeable that Yarborough read it all through with the greatest enjoyment, and burst out laughing at the shrewdest hits. He did not in the least mind being made fun of: a laudatory notice would have bored him, but here he was in his element, and felt as the old campaigner feels when the

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first bullets come humming and piping across the sand.

An hour later he was standing before the door of Carteret's private office, situated, like most editorial *sancta*, at the top of two flights of stairs which looked as if they had not been scrubbed for a month. Disregarding a printed intimation of strict privacy, Yarborough tapped once and walked in without waiting for an answer. The room was small and dingy and whitened by a snow-drift of papers, and the editor himself sat perched on a high stool before a large bureau, turning his face towards the opening door with a preoccupied but indignant look, like a cross baby owl. Recognising Yarborough, however, he relaxed into a benevolent smile.

"What does thee want, lad? Tell me about it, quick: I'm busy."

Yarborough tilted a heap of manuscripts uncere- moniously upon the floor, and dropped into a chair facing the window, so that what light could penetrate the discoloured panes fell across his features, revealing their pallor and look of sombre composure. His reply was to hand Carteret his own copy of *Life*, laying his finger on the selected paragraph. Carteret lifted his eyebrows.

"Don't play the Sphinx in private life, it's in bad taste. What does thee mean by that?"

"You did know it was in, then? There is no mistake?"

"I generally read my own leaders," said Carteret, puzzled. "What mistake should there be?"

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"I fancied there might have been some error," Yarborough answered after a short pause: voice and face alike significantly expressionless.

"Surely thee's not offended?"

"What right have I to be offended?"

"None at all," Carteret assented placidly. "But that would not prevent thee, if thee wanted to be. Only I don't see why thee should."

Yarborough shrugged his shoulders. "It is a damaging article," he said coldly.

"It's not the first."

"It is the worst."

"But—hang it all, lad! I never professed to defend thee, did I? *Life* is a Liberal paper, but I suppose it isn't bound to swear by every little whipper-snapper that likes to hang up his hat in the Opposition lobby?"

Yarborough started to his feet. "If that is the way you look at it, I can have no more to say," he exclaimed, strong resentment breaking through the enforced quiet of his tone: and he turned to leave the room.

"Stop," said Carteret.

Yarborough hesitated, his hand on the door.

"Come back, lad, and sit down and talk it over quietly. I never meant to hurt thee: I thought that thick hide of thine was too tough to feel the scratch of a pen. Indeed, I don't even now see what's wrong. Is it that I've made too much fun of thee? Boys generally like to be taken seriously, but I thought thee had sense enough to see a joke against thyself."

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Yarborough turned his head away to conceal a momentary spasm which contracted his features. "I am not a fool," he said with asperity. "I trust that I know how to endure mockery in a good cause." Here seeing Carteret's blue eyes open rather widely, he perceived that he had overshot his mark, and hurried on. "I looked at it from a business point of view. These are critical times; and my worst enemy could hardly have put forward a more dangerous attack."

Carteret passed his hand wearily across his forehead. "Oh, go on, go on," he said. "I never was an enemy of thine before, but I will be after this: the boy's stark mad, I think."

"That reference to the election is likely to prove singularly damaging. You imply, in effect, that I gave up my own seat simply in order to curry favour with Hammersley, and you hint that even so I should never have done it, if I had not had some promising schemes of personal aggrandisement up my sleeve."

"Lord love thee, my dear boy," said Carteret spitefully, "everybody knew *that* before."

Yarborough flushed, and his lip quivered. "That is absolutely an insult, Carteret, do you know?" he said quietly.

"Insult, fiddlesticks!"

"As you please. I never complained when you called me a fool, because that is one of the incidental joys of public life; but I really cannot permit you to tell me that I am a rogue."

"What does thee mean by that? Perhaps thee would like me to retract and apologise?"

"*Life* is too great a paper to apologise merely be-

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cause it is in the wrong," Yarborough answered, with a bitter little smile and bow. "I had no such dreams."

"Then what the dickens does thee want?"

"Nothing."

"Then what did thee come for?"

"To find out whether I had lost a friend."

"And thee thinks thee has?"

Yarborough assented by a gesture.

"Well, I'm sure!" fumed Carteret, regarding the dark, bent head with an ireful, injured look: "I thought thee had more sense. I believe," he added, struck by a sudden idea, "thee's trying to humbug me."

"To humbug you?" repeated Yarborough, taken aback in his turn: he had not expected to encounter such perspicuity.

"Yes: come now, isn't this nothing but a piece of thy infernal cunning—a put-up job, to get something out of me?"

Yarborough got up and came and stood before the editor: he spoke with a hurried and low articulation which betrayed the nervous strength of his passion. "That is all you have to say to me?" he said. "That is enough of an apology from you to me, who could have ruined you any time these two years past, but held my tongue because I thought I was your friend."

"I—don't—understand—" began Carteret, but broke off, conscious that by his blanched features and stumbling utterance he was giving himself the lie. Yarborough laughed in his face.

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"You look as if you did; but spare your fears, I sha'n't tell any one. I'm not the editor of a newspaper."

"Tell—what?"

"Tell why you spent ten years on the Continent, and came back with a false name."

Carteret slid off the stool and faced him, not without dignity. "Good God, Yarborough, what can you know? I thought that old scandal was dead and buried."

"Why, old scandals never die," said Yarborough. "A few questions in the proper quarter told me all I wanted to hear about Cecil Carey."

"But what—how much do you know?" Carteret asked.

"Do you expect a categorical answer? You won't like it."

"Let me hear it."

"You were the worst kind of drunkard—heavy, secret, habitual. You adored your wife, but that did not prevent you from knocking her about in your crazy fits, and forcing her into the society which you yourself frequented, till she got sick of it, and applied for a divorce. You fled, and went to live in Russia; she went incontinently into a rapid decline, and died within six months. On her death-bed she forgave you and sent for you, but you hadn't the pluck to come, and she was crying out for you day and night for a week before she died."

Carteret fell into the chair from which Yarborough had just risen, and lay there inert, the foggy morn-

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ing sunshine streaming across his ghastly face. "Oh, you must be the devil!" he said, when he could speak. "Good God! . . . and I know it's all true, only I never put it to myself like that before."

"Yours was a chronicle of emotions," said Yarborough dryly; "mine was a narrative of facts. You thought of all you would have preferred to do; I confined myself to what you did."

"How did you know my name? I thought no one would ever know me, what with the change of clothes and the Quaker talk, and sure enough no one has, though I was well enough known before. But I was changed. It made an old man of me. You can't have recognised me."

"I saw your name scribbled on the back page of a book you lent me—do you remember? An Elzevir Horace that you said you had had since you were a child."

"I remember lending it to you to look at, because it was a rare edition. By Jove, what a fool I was! I did look on the fly-leaf too: but I never thought of the back page."

"I knew your writing, and was puzzled; then, too, I had a faint recollection of the Carey *cause célèbre*," said Yarborough. He threw his arm suddenly round Carteret's shoulders. "Don't, don't, Cecil!" he said. "Don't, old man."

"You may call me a coward if you like, and welcome," Carteret said, leaning his head on his hand. "You don't know what it's like to loathe yourself."

"Don't I?" said Yarborough. "To be sure not:

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and yet by the aid of a fertile imagination I may form a tolerably good guess at it. Self-loathing is the lawful offspring of a pure will and a degraded ambition: it is the longing to rend off the garment spotted by the flesh and stand naked and trembling in the presence of the Divine: it is the voice which prays, *Let me be purified, even so as by fire.*"

Carteret eyed him curiously: he had regained his self-control while Yarborough was speaking, as probably he had been meant to do. "There is something fine about you at times, lad," he said thoughtfully. "And you don't gloss over your misdeeds as I'm afraid I do."

"That is probably owing to the comparative blamelessness of my life. If I had your record behind me, there's no knowing what I might have been tempted to do."

"Do you know, I'm half glad you've found out," Carteret said abruptly. "I never told a living soul about it—I *couldn't*: but I'm half glad you know. It's an awful thing to wake up in the night and lie and think what a brute you've been, and wish you could have it over again, when you can't. Things are all so changed, and I'm changed myself since I put away the drink, that I feel sometimes as if it couldn't have been I that killed that girl, as if that part of my life belonged to a different man: and yet I know it was I right enough, and nothing, nothing can take away what's done. There it lies, that last awful year, like a great plague-spot among all the other years; with the crazy drunken days and

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the horrible nights, and Agnes lying dying and crying out for me, that was too idiotically drunk to read my own letters—! There, I didn't mean to tell you all this: but you can guess how awful it is to lie and think about it in the darkness."

"At all events, I shall not give you away: you've my word of honour for that."

"Have I?" Carteret glanced at him very keenly. "If you'd a grain of commercial spirit in you, you'd have offered to blackmail me."

"How many thousands would you have paid me to hold my tongue? Or I could have bargained with you for your support in *Life*: upon my word, I seem to have thrown away a chance."

"That you have, sonny, and I'm surprised at you: I am, indeed! I didn't think you had it in you to behave so pretty."

Either injured innocence, or some less creditable emotion, brought the colour to Yarborough's cheek. "Do you mean that?" he exclaimed, looking very much inclined to walk out of the room in the heat of his indignation. Carteret's face relaxed, and he leaned forward, softly patting Yarborough's hand.

"There, there, lad, don't be such a pepper-box!" he said soothingly. "Thee must learn to keep a cool head on thy shoulders if thee wants to be a great man by and-by."

"Your humour has an acid flavour: I thought you spoke seriously."

"And so I do. Nay, listen!" He kept a firm hand on Yarborough's coat as he went on. "I always said if ever I found a man worth making, I'd

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make him: and I mean to make you, for you're worth it. You're honest in the main, and a gentleman, and you seem to have your wits about you. If you had tried to make capital out of what you knew, I'd not have written a line to support you, nor tossed you a penny to keep you from starving. We Guernsey folk have a pinch of the salt of obstinacy in us, you know—you'd not have got much by trying it on with me. But, as I said before, I like thee, lad: and thee'll have no cause to regret this day's doings. Come, thee must go now," he continued, releasing Yarborough's coat-tails and waving his hand towards the door. "Thee's wasted all my morning with thy silly nonsense and—all the rest of it. Come, march!"

But his hand trembled as he laid it in Yarborough's cool fingers, and his step was unsteady: he was no longer a young man, and the interview had greatly shaken him. Not one word of gratitude could Yarborough bring himself to utter: the whole business had grown utterly distasteful to him, and he was thankful to get out of Carteret's sight. Neither excitement nor triumph could be exacted from such a victory. Yarborough was cut to the heart by Carteret's evident suffering, by his aged and broken look, by the generosity of his promise and the simplicity of his faith. As he walked away from Carteret's room, he went through all the sensations which he had described to Carteret in his little essay on self-contempt; and yet he knew all the while that if it had been to do over again he would have done it, to the last particular. His own

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verdict, uttered aloud to a cabinet photograph of Edmund Yarborough in the solitude of the deaf walls of Bexton Street, summed up the situation with impartial accuracy.

“Do you remember, old Eddy, how you told me once that I combined the tastes of an aristocrat with the morality of a Bow Street pickpocket? And yet is there no excuse for me, if I hate myself for what I do, and get no pleasure in the doing of it, and still go on doing it? Do you call a man a thief who robs a granary at the risk of his life for the sake of giving corn to a starving people? Only, a man needs to be very sure of himself before he can dare play Providence”

By the afternoon, however, Yarborough's spirits had revived, and he set out for Grandison Square in one of his imperious moods, excited and arrogant. He perceived no incongruity in coming, fresh from such a triumph, to visit Margaret, whom he had likened to the Madonna of tradition.

He was ushered into the drawing-room, where he found Althea, sitting alone in one of her most elegant frocks, with a book in her hand which she had probably not been reading. She received him very politely; not too politely, lest he should turn recalcitrant, but with an air of gracious interest which soothed and flattered him against his will. Althea, as a patron of romance, was delighted to see that he looked repeatedly towards the door.

“Where is Miss Carew?” he asked, as soon as a pause occurred. “I had hoped to have the pleasure of seeing her, and reassuring myself on her account.”

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"It's very ungrateful of her not to come down," said Althea laughing. She disapproved of Yarborough's manner, which was undeniably forward. "She is so fond of reading, she is always shut up with a book. It's just possible she doesn't know you are here."

Not having previously envisaged the possibility that she did know, Yarborough was duly disconcerted by this proposition. "Does she really care for reading?" he said. "How singular!"

"Dear me, Mr. Yarborough, why shouldn't she?"

"I thought it was one of those things that all women say they like, and don't: like music, and week-day services."

"You are very rude to us," said Althea, more than a little ruffled, perhaps because, for her, his words were true. "I'm afraid you don't know very much about women. We shall have to try and civilise you a little, and teach you to think prettier things."

Yarborough awoke to the fact that he was not behaving like a philosopher or a statesman. He studied Althea through dropped lashes for a moment before replying.

"I know very little about ladies, Mrs. Carew: my mother died when I was still a child, and my life has been lived almost exclusively among men. Forgive me if I show myself rough and boorish, and acknowledge that it is the finest tribute I could pay to the refining effect of their influence."

"I always think a political life must be so dreadfully lonely," Althea murmured, her maternal heart melting immediately. "You clever people who do

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all the work have no time to cultivate any of the little luxuries and amenities of life. My husband always says he has no time to make friends. Now, I could not live without friendship! I think it is such a sweet, such a comforting thing, don't you? And so invigorating."

Yarborough was tempted to suggest that it must be rather like Baker's Cocoa, but refrained. "Friendship?" he repeated, with a partially stifled sigh. "That 'shade that follows wealth and fame' is rarely vouchsafed to an unknown and struggling politician."

Dewy pity, mingled with an agreeable feeling of patronage, inspired Althea's tone with increasing warmth. "I'm sure you work too hard," she said earnestly. "It is such a mistake to overwork when one is young. I knew a girl once, such a clever girl she was, and her people wanted her to go in for the Cambridge Locum, or something appalling. And, do you know, she overworked herself, and broke down in the most terrible way, and actually had to be—er—removed, you know. I always think it was such a shocking case. And she's there still."

Yarborough, who had a bad habit of classifying his acquaintance generally as fools (a practice to which in after life he owed not a few mortifying reverses), now found his genus widened to embrace a novel and unique species; and he was glad: he would have been disappointed had Althea proved to be anything less than extremely silly. "Quite so," he said blandly, but with a somewhat grim smile. "A most shocking affair. But I don't

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fancy there's much danger of that for me, you know: our work is on such different lines from that you describe. I have never studied the question, but I should imagine the curriculum was something quite inordinate."

Althea, the latter end of whose commonwealth had certainly forgotten the beginning, looked a trifle confused. She had not intended to imply that Yarborough might some day require to be "removed." She also thought that he used very long words.

"By-the-bye," she said, "talking of politics, I believe you know Mr. Savile, don't you?"

"I know him politically. In my opinion, he is a magnificent man."

"Oh, do you? I'm so glad. He's quite one of our most intimate friends. He's very often here at tea-time on my not-at-home days. Such a charming fellow, and so domestic. I quite wonder he isn't here to-day; he comes in so very often."

"Does he?" said Yarborough. "He is very fortunate."

"Oh, we're always delighted to see all our friends."

"Do you include all the lonely and outcast and uncivilised among your friends?"

"Certainly, when they have earned the title by doing true knight's service," answered Althea prettily.

"You mean, when they come and hand the tea-cups?"

"No, I was thinking—but I don't think we need go into that. Great statesmen are not allowed to blush, are they?"

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"Surely, except when they're caught out in a figure of speech. I should have thought you would have learned all these diplomatic and ministerial secrets from your husband, Mrs. Carew."

Frederic's position in the Home Office was known to be neither conspicuous nor confidential, therefore Althea blushed with gratification, while Yarborough congratulated himself upon a development of his experience: he had now learned how to subjugate the new species of fool. While he was exulting, the door opened, and Margaret came in. She wore an old brown frock, with a short skirt and a faded bodice: a lace scarf, several seasons old, was twisted softly round her throat, and her hair was pushed in untidy waves off her forehead.

"Althea, I'm so sorry," she exclaimed. "I was reading, and I forgot the time. How do you do, Mr. Yarborough? Isn't it a foggy afternoon?"

Certainly these were not original remarks, yet they had a potent effect on Yarborough. He felt ashamed of his own bad motives, of his cheap victory over Althea Carew, of the sterner, treacherous fight with Carteret. He would have liked to impress and dazzle her, to waken fire, even the fire of wrath, in those critical soft eyes; but instead he had hard work to keep control of his own voice and manner, while Margaret's mood was one of estranged quiescence flecked with satire.

"What have you been talking about?" she asked, seating herself in a chair, as Althea afterwards told her, "just where the light showed up that dreadful patch in your elbow!"

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"I don't know," said Yarborough absently. Margaret raised her eyebrows with a quizzical glance.

"Did you miss me very much?" she inquired, helping herself to a muffin. "You ought to have, because I never forget to hand people hot cakes. I hand them whenever I want one myself, as a kind of pretext for taking it."

Yarborough rallied his wits, and laughed. "We have been talking politics," he said; "Mrs. Carew condescended to the level of my ignorance. We also talked of the higher education of women" (Althea appeared surprised to hear it), "and Mainwaring Savile."

"Mainwaring Savile?" repeated Margaret. "Oh, I suppose you abused him?"

Yarborough looked up quickly. "Now, why should you say that?" he asked. "I said I thought him a rare and splendid type of Englishman: and so I do."

"I'm so awfully sorry; I thought political people always abused the other side. But I suppose they don't in private life."

"Far too clever, believe me," said Yarborough grimly.

"Oh, Margaret!" broke in Althea, "how can you say such things? Mr. Yarborough hadn't a word to say against Mainwaring, and I'm sure he wouldn't, even if he had."

"I sit corrected," said Margaret. "Don't both snub me at once, please. I shall go away if you do. Even muffins wouldn't console me for that."

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"Have you got over your disagreeable experience yesterday?"

Margaret wondered that Yarborough should be the first to refer to it, till she met his eyes and perceived by them that he saw nothing in the incident to merit thanks or praise. "You *are* odd!" she said involuntarily.

"Am I? After that, you must explain yourself."

"Well, perhaps it's only my conceit that makes me feel as if you *must* be odd," Margaret explained. "You evidently don't think me half such an important person as I think myself."

"A very bad shot, Miss Carew. I see you can't read character."

"That's very kind of you. I would like to be thought important," said Margaret. "All the same, I don't believe you. You don't think anything of saving my life. You don't even expect to be thanked for it."

"I saved your life?" Yarborough echoed.

"Well, didn't you know it?"

"It hadn't struck me in that light before. What was it you said yesterday? That I risked my life to save yours?"

"Yes, wasn't it heroic?" assented Margaret, fire sparkling in the witch-hazel of her eyes. "Don't you admire yourself?"

"I envy myself. I should like to do it again and know that I was doing it."

"Oh, I know," Margaret exclaimed eagerly. "One always does the exciting things in a hurry, and one never has time to analyse and appreciate prop-

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erly. To be nearly killed, like that, ought to be a kind of transfiguring, illuminating experience: but in real life it comes all in a flash, and doesn't illuminate any more than a flash of lightning. Yesterday, when those horses were on me, I'll tell you what I was thinking of: I was wondering whether my clothes would ever be fit to put on again. Now wasn't that disappointing?"

"I suppose one hardly ever gets the full flavour of an adventure at the time," said Yarborough, "unless one is thoroughly inured to them. Like, for example, Mainwaring Savile."

"Oh, Mainwaring Savile . . ." said Margaret. "Yes, he has had lots. Dear me, what nonsense we're talking! Have you been to the Academy this year, Mr. Yarborough? Althea took me to the private view."

Yarborough wished Althea at a distance. He was longing to discuss this new and startling proposition, that he had saved Margaret's life: to work it out in all its bearings, instead of engaging in a triangular conversation about pictures which he had never seen except through the medium of art critiques. However, he behaved very well, and was polite to his hostess with a politeness which defied the scrutiny of Margaret, who knew that men very often laughed at Althea. When he got up to go, he received his reward, in the shape of an invitation to come in whenever he wanted a little rest.

"Then I shall be here very often," he said, with his shallow smile.

"You can't come too often," said Margaret ab-

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sently, anxious to be gracious but thinking of something else.

“How about the white satin now?” demanded Althea, as the door closed upon their guest. “But oh, Margaret, I never knew you could be such a shocking little flirt!”

VII

THE WANDERER

A BRIGHT fire blazed upon the hearth, and the polished steel of the andirons flickered with reflected gleams of bluish flames. A wall of fog pressed against the windows, dark, solid, chilly: but the dark, shabby room, filled with antique furniture and lit by the play of dancing fire-light, withheld itself from gloom and cold as an island rises out of the tide. Savile sat at the piano, his face turned towards the glowing coals, his strong hands fitfully wakening the sleep of the keys, near him Estcourt, who was tall and dark and lean and lazy, reclined in an American chair with an embrowned meerschaum between his lips, his sallow hands clasped at the back of his head, his cadaverous eyes and high forensic forehead appearing and disappearing behind spiral wreaths of smoke.

Their friendship had taken its rise in an incident of Estcourt's early manhood, which was both uncommon in its circumstances and characteristic in its development. They had been together at Eton, where Savile, by virtue of his great strength and love of silent justice, became an acknowledged leader, while Estcourt, precocious and lazy, hating games, talkative, impudent, democratic, and sneering, got

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himself heartily disliked. Later they parted company, for Savile, at the age of sixteen, vanished mysteriously during the summer holidays, and was reported to have taken himself off gypsy-fashion into foreign parts, while Estcourt went up to Oxford and got into a wild, gay set, and was the ringleader in every piece of mischief or audacity that did not involve much physical exertion. But he paid the price of his popularity before leaving the university, for he got heavily in debt, fell among Jews, and was finally reduced to such straits that he went the round of his friends asking them to back a bill for him. Very discreetly, however, they declined to commit themselves; and then, in despair, hearing that Mainwaring Savile was back in town, he turned to him, as an old school-fellow, though never a very close acquaintance. He could not have gone to any man less likely to deny him, or to annoy him with good advice. Savile endorsed the bill, and asked no questions: and nine months later found himself let in to the amount of £1500. Savile at that time had not come into possession of his property, but was living on an allowance of five hundred a year: and he was too proud to ask help of his guardian, Lord Ferdinand. He sold his horses, pawned his scanty jewelry, and persuaded the makers to take back the splendid seventy-horse-power racing-car which he had just had built for himself after two years' economical wandering: raised and paid the money, and left himself temporarily penniless. Estcourt, completely sobered by the shock, apologised by letter and told Savile that he would work day and

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night till his debt was paid. He got his letter back by return of post, torn neatly across and across. He met Savile in the street and tried to speak to him; and Savile cut him dead. Then, since after all he was a gentleman, and had sufficient common-sense to own that he deserved all he had got, he went and made his apologies to his indignant father, got work as a clerk, and starved in a garret on £50 a year while he saved the other £50 which made up his salary. Seeing that he was really trying to reform, Mr. Estcourt, who was an eminent King's Counsel, took him away from the office-work which he detested and sent him to the Bar, where thanks to luck, industry, aptitude, and paternal influence he succeeded better than one man in a thousand. Seven years after the affair of the bill, he sent Savile a cheque for £1500 plus seven years' compound interest at three per cent., wrapped in a sheet of paper on which was written: "*With renewed apologies, from A. St. L. E.*"

The next day Savile called at his rooms, to acknowledge, as he said, the receipt of payment. Before a dozen words had passed, he took the cheque from his pocket, tore it up and threw it into the fire. Estcourt, white with anger, told him he had no right to refuse restitution.

"Yes, I have," said Savile coldly. "What you did was dishonest, and dishonesty can't be wiped out at compound interest. What's fifteen hundred now to me? It won't buy me back the ring my father left me, or the horse I used to ride. Write

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a fresh cheque and give it to a charity: and allow me to name my own repayment."

"What is that?" said Estcourt astonished.

"Your acceptance of an apology which I wish to make to you. I took you for a common swindler, but it seems there was good stuff in you after all. In any case, my garments are not so spotless that I can afford to play the Pharisee. What I did would have sent a weaker man to the devil. I'm sorry for it: now, am I forgiven?"

And he held out his hand to Estcourt, who took it without a word. From that day forth they were friends. Estcourt gave the money to a charity and submitted to remain in Savile's debt; but he paid Savile out by bullying him and tyrannising over him to such an extent that Savile said he couldn't call his soul his own. They got on very well together, in a close alliance, checkered by quarrels, usually provoked by Estcourt, who never got angry himself, but insisted religiously that it was Savile's part to make the first overtures of peace. Estcourt was a born lounge: into the solitary act of energy that won him Savile's friendship he had been goaded only by the spur of Savile's contempt. Now he professed to be delicate, and worked by fits and starts, as the mood took him, content to admire at a distance the virtues and vices and wrestlings of men more spirited than himself. He lived very comfortably on a moderate income: marriage had no attraction for him: he was a member of several slightly Bohemian clubs: he wanted nothing to make him happy except his meerschaum, an easy-chair, a novel of Bal-

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zac, and Savile's society. And Savile, despite his strict theories and his wandering blood, was curiously tolerant of Estcourt's laziness, tolerant even of the little syringe and phial of cocaine which were sometimes to be found on Estcourt's table. He had a certain respect for the indolent man whom he could neither incite nor irritate.

A tongue of flame sprang out, whistling like a gas-jet, from a cranny in the ruby embers. They were lighting the lamps in the foggy streets, although it was three o'clock in the afternoon and the time was early June. Estcourt's pipe diffused a bluish haze through the darkened room: he yawned, turning a leaf. Savile struck a final chord with nervous, sledge-hammer fingers, and wheeled round towards the fire with an impatient jerk of his shoulders.

"Put away that book and listen to me," he said crossly; "I'm bothered."

Estcourt laid *La Bête Humaine* face downward on his knee. "It's very dull," he said; "too many murders in it. So fire away, old man: I'll smoke the pipe of peace and revolve your difficulties."

"It's an odd business, and in a way delicate. It's—"

"—Got a petticoat in."

"It has something to do with a lady."

"Well, you can't expect me to deliver a verdict till I've heard the evidence. Is she plain or pretty?"

"It has reference also to Christian Yarborough," Savile said with his most repressive air, and turning

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a deaf ear to the inquiry. "You remember, I told you about him?"

"Fellow who bunked with the treaty?"

Savile nodded.

"Well, I don't see why you need have put down so many wrong notes, anyhow. You're no sort of a pianist, to let your temper get the better of you like that."

"I know I don't play well," said Savile, restlessly touching single notes. "I never was taught: I've no execution, and I never like anything except outlandish tunes and big chords in the minor. I'm not fit for drawing-rooms. I'm not the sort of man that women like."

"So—ho, my friend!" said Estcourt, clasping his sallow hands at the back of his head, and turning his gray-green eyes on Savile's face. "That way lies perdition, tight gloves, and a flower in your button-hole."

"I haven't got as far as perdition yet, let alone the rest. I've only got to the stage of feeling like a fool," said Savile, settling his forehead into a little frown. "I'm handicapped by my height and build and all the rest of it. What's the use of being a good revolver-shot if you don't know how to waltz?"

"It depends. Who is she?"

"Miss Margaret Carew."

"Old Freddy's cousin, or whatever it is? The brown-eyed girl?"

"I believe Miss Carew's eyes are brown."

"Why so nervous? I should think she'd jump at

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the Evil One himself for a chance of getting away from old Freddy."

"Now, look here, Tony—"

"All right, I understand the way you feel about it: she's not the sort of girl one would care to have exposed to chance words. But what is Yarborough doing in that galley? I thought he never took any notice of women."

"That's what it is. He's always at the house now: Mrs. Carew seems to have given him the run of it."

"And you are jealous?"

"It's not that. If he were a gentleman, I'd fight fair."

"His mother was a farm-hand, or so I've heard: but after all a man takes rank from the father's side, and they are one of our oldest commoner families," said Estcourt, who prided himself on his own patrician descent and had made a study of Debrett.

"He's not fit to touch the hand of a lady. I'd like to have him hounded out of every club in London."

Estcourt raised his eyebrows. "So bad as all that?"

"The fellow's a moral leper. Look at the way he treated his brother!"

"Mind, that's all pure guess-work. You haven't a shadow of proof."

"I've all the proof I want in the memory of his face," Savile said with a grim laugh which made Estcourt look at him in fascination and dismay. "I can't stand that fellow, Tony. He's always getting in my way."

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"We don't want any penny-novelette business, you know," Estcourt said hastily. "I beg of you not to get melodramatic, old boy!"

"But he's so infernally annoying," Savile explained. "If he lied malevolently about me I'd not care, but he's too clever for that: his line is to laud me to the skies! Of course the Carews are struck by his generosity, and then when I try to make them understand how things really lie between us, and that we hate each other like a couple of Corsicans, they simply get more convinced than ever that he's a Christian hero and I'm a jealous brute."

"Which of course you are not in the least?"

Savile did not reply for a moment: then he spoke doggedly. "Yes, I am," he said. "I'm jealous of letting him breathe the same air with Mar—Miss Carew. I can see that the fellow's handsome, and in his way attractive: but to me he's an unadulterated charlatan."

"Well, perhaps he'll sober down, like the great Dizzy," Estcourt suggested, yawning. "At all events, he didn't turn up in the House and make his maiden speech in a bottle-green frock-coat and large check-pattern pantaloons, with a shirt-front glittering with chains, and clusters of well-oiled coal-black ringlets shading his classic and collarless throat."

"Dare say I'm prejudiced: but I don't like thieves."

"He was dishonest: so was I. I stole £1500.

"At the time you stole that money I certainly

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shouldn't have introduced you to any lady I respected."

Estcourt winced: he was ready to abuse himself, but always added a private rider to the effect that he was not half so bad as he made out: this kind of mental reservation Savile annoyed him inexpressibly by trampling under foot. "What is it you're afraid of?" he asked abruptly.

"He's handsome, and as clever as Lucifer, and she doesn't know anything about him."

"An elegant ellipse! Verdict for the plaintiff, with costs."

"Well, but what am I to do?"

"I should cut him out, if I were you," said Estcourt, smiling.

"But if I can't?"

"Then I'm afraid you'll have to grin and bear it." Estcourt's tone was philosophical, for he was fully convinced that no girl in her senses would ever refuse Mainwaring Savile: but Savile, who could not be expected to share or even apprehend this view, was naturally incensed by his calm.

"You expect me to stand idly by and watch her marry that swindling liar?" he said incredulously. "You, who know Margaret?"

"Why, what else can you do? You said you'd hold your tongue. You can't go back on him now, or he'll say you did it out of jealousy. Besides, it would be such a beastly thing to do."

"In that case I'm a beast, then: for I'm going to do it."

"By Jove, Savile, you don't mean it—you can't!"

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"If she gets engaged to him blindfold, I shall do it."

"Do it? Do what?"

"I'll tell her about the treaty."

"Why, she'd never believe you!" Estcourt exclaimed. "Good women always believe the man they love."

"Margaret's got a head on her shoulders," said Savile. He turned to the piano, and struck out a fire-phrase of Chopin. "I've no business to call her by her name," he said, setting his teeth. "I didn't mean to. I can't break myself of thinking of her so."

"Well, I don't know but what I admire you for doing it," said Estcourt after a moment's silence: the last naïf confession had struck him with a touch of strangeness, almost of awe. "But nine men out of ten would call it a shabby trick."

"Thanks, I've got my own code of honour: and I don't want to borrow yours."

"Would you mind telling me why you asked my advice?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Savile grimly. "I won't again."

"Don't get fractious, old man. I see your point of view, and I respect you for doing it, although I shouldn't do it myself: probably I haven't enough moral courage. But, honestly, do you think it will ever come to that? You aren't bad-looking, you know."

Savile moved restlessly and made no reply, except by a sudden dominant thunder of chords vibrating with bitter harmonies. He was, as he had said, no

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great musician, no master of the keys such as Edmund Yarborough had been: but a rough, stormy player, stumbling amid wrong notes and broken time, yet instinct with sombre passion for the wild music that was after his own heart, for the splendid deadly glory of a revengeful ballad, a folk-song of death wrought by phantoms, a victor's march over a highway of the dead.

It was Mrs. Carew's at-home day, and Savile, when he had played himself tired, went and called upon her. There were a good many people present in spite of the fog, but Yarborough was not among them: indeed, a few minutes later Savile heard Althea explaining that poor Mr. Yarborough's time was so taken up with those horrid politics that he hadn't been to see them for days. This was doubly annoying to Savile; in the first place, he did not see why Yarborough should be expected as a daily guest, and secondly he could not understand why Yarborough should be so busy, when he himself had comparatively little to do. Margaret was pouring out tea in a recess, hidden from the rest of the room by an embroidered curtain: it was a further trial to Savile to find that her seclusion was shared by a boy of twenty-two, with a downy mustache and the profile of an anxious cherub.

"I had an awfully good time at the races last week," he was saying as Savile drew near. "I didn't see *you* there, Miss Carew, though I looked out for you: honestly, I did! I'd have shown you where to lay your money. I backed Blue Gum for all I was worth, so I'm in funds now."

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"Did you have a good time because you backed Blue Gum or because I wasn't there?" asked Margaret. "I think I shall give you a little tract about betting. I've been told that you generally end by murdering somebody."

"Do," said the boy vaguely. "I'll read them if I've time. I'm playing in the match this week: won't you come down to Lord's and see me field?"

"I'd like to, awfully," said Margaret. "Is it football?" He staggered under the shock, and she added hastily, "I'm so sorry, but I'm trying to count lumps of sugar on my fingers, and milk on my thumbs, and it's confusing. Please take this cup to Mrs. Lloyd-Stevenson."

Savile stepped adroitly into the vacant place. "How do you do?" he said. "Aren't you tired of talking about cricket?"

"Oh, it's you, Mr. Savile," said Margaret. "He's really very nice, only he expects me to know such a lot of things. I never had any brothers, and I can't play games: no wonder he thinks me dull."

"I think he thought you were laughing at him. It never struck him that you could be ignorant of anything which interested him."

"People are all egotistical," said Margaret. "Men talk sport to women, and women talk babies to men. Do you like babies, Mr. Savile? I'm sure you don't. I don't believe men ever do, in spite of what they say."

"Then it's not much good my saying anything," said Savile. "All the same, as a matter of fact I'm rather keen on babies. I like all little children."

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Margaret glanced at him critically, struck by the full vibrant quality of his tone, as he stood in the doorway, holding aside the curtain with his lifted hand. The powerful and controlled quiescence of his magnificent frame gave him the look of an antique statue, quick through its stillness with the noblest kind of virility: and as a statue Margaret admired him absently, till she recollected that he was after all a man. Then suddenly the idea occurred to her that if he chose he could lift her from her feet and hold her above his head, powerless in his grasp: and in some indefinite way the mere fancy set her faintly blushing. But her words as usual, came straight from the springs of her thought.

"Mr. Savile, how much can you lift?"

"Is it a riddle?" he asked, laughing. "Ten hundredweight, to-night: after a month's regular training, a ton."

"Isn't that very enormous?" said Margaret, eying him dubiously.

"It's pretty big: few amateurs can do as much."

"Don't you rather enjoy it?"

"I like the power right enough—like to feel that I could lick any three men in the room, if I wanted to. But it's a risky thing, for my temper's none of the sweetest."

"Do you mean that you are afraid of abusing your strength?"

"Certainly: it's on the cards. You're talking to a potential murderer. Abnormal strength is the very deuce of a temptation: it's worse than carrying a loaded six-shooter in your hip-pocket."

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"You know what that is like."

"I reckon so! Why, I was in Yukon through the first flush of the gold-fever: I know the diamond-mines—" he stopped abruptly. "I'm ten times worse than that beastly little Townshend kid," he said. "Why didn't you point out that I was boring you?"

In vain did Margaret assure him that she had not been bored. Savile was slow to speak of himself, and having once got off the track could not be induced to return to it again.

Later in the afternoon, when all the other guests were gone, Althea begged to be excused, on the plea that she wanted to write a note, and handed over Savile, whom she had kept at her side through all the farewells, to Margaret's care. Savile sat down in an American chair, while Margaret dropped unconventionally into a heap on the rug. She was apt to get into inelegant attitudes, chiefly through absence of mind; fortunately, however, that lovely youthful figure of hers, with its supple springing lines and smooth contours, retained the charm of spiritual harmony in spite of shabby clothes or queerly tilted angles.

"Now go on," she said. "Every one's gone, and I'll tell you directly I'm bored. Talk, please."

"Now you have given me carte blanche," said Savile, "I'm going to tell you what I've been thinking all the afternoon. How wonderfully that blue frock becomes you!"

Margaret repressed a smile. "Does it?" she said. "I'm glad. It's rather old all the same. What a

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lot of things you have managed to get into your life, Mr. Savile! I can't think how you found time to combine such wonderful wanderings with the serious business of politics."

"I didn't turn in to work in London till I was five - and - twenty: I had a free hand for nine years."

"Nine years?" repeated Margaret, with a questioning look which said, "Please explain."

"I never was at a university. I ran away from Eton when I was sixteen. I disliked discipline, restriction, exam work, dead languages. I wanted to get away into the open lands, and smell the sea, and all that. I guess I graduated fighting among Mexican cow-boys, or breaking in wild horses with the domidors of Chile."

"But at sixteen!" said Margaret, with a mixture of pity and disapproval. "And had you any money?"

"I got myself an outfit with a £10 note that Lord Ferdinand, my uncle, sent me on my birthday, and took a first-class ticket down on the strength of it. Then I worked my way out as a deck-hand."

"I don't think they ought to have taken you," said Margaret.

"They didn't know. It has always come easy to me to drop the gentleman, you know," Savile explained, with a touch of diffidence. "And I must have looked every day of twenty years. Besides, I knew a lot about the work, for my father was a keen yachtsman, and I had often made one of an ama-

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teur crew." He broke off with a short sigh, which made Margaret regard him queerly.

"I did not know you could remember your father," she said in that low, finely modulated tone by which the most commonplace words are set to music.

"I was fourteen when he died," said Savile. Then, with an abrupt change of manner and an almost comical glance of entreaty, he added, "Please don't make me talk about myself any more."

Margaret was tempted to laugh, but forebore, seeing him really distressed. "I wouldn't do it, if it bored me," she said. "Do believe that I am not so wonderfully unselfish, Mr. Savile! I wish I had a celestial nose, then people would not always think me so very much better than I am. You interest me because you have done just what I should like to do, if I had been born a man. I would so have liked to run away to sea and tame wild horses."

Savile evinced no surprise at this revolutionary speech, which Margaret flung out with a certain energy, feeling that she would have liked to be overheard by Frederic Carew, who on the rare occasions when he acted as Margaret's escort insisted on going in a four-wheeler because hansoms were dangerous. "Yes, that's fascinating," he said soberly, yet with a sparkling glance of communicable excitement. "How should you like to see a horse racing along the level at full gallop, arrested and flung back like a statue over the cloak of its rider tossed on the ground?"

"Splendid! I'd love it."

Savile laughed. "I'd liked to have introduced

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you to my father; his eternal cry was that English-women have no spirit."

"I suppose that means that your mother liked needle-work?"

"I forget. I was only a baby when she died. I guess he was fond of her, though, because he never talked about her even to me."

"I don't see that at all. How queer you are!" Margaret could not help saying. "Surely he might have told his own son about her."

"My father was queer, if you like," said Savile. He spoke of this dead father with a tranquillity which Althea would certainly have considered callous, but Margaret divined that it concealed some profound and quiet channel of feeling which the years would never dry up. "He used to say that seafaring was his business and politics his distraction. He took office only because he was badgered into it. He only conformed to the laws to save himself trouble. I don't think he cared a red cent for waste of human life; as for our ethical and social systems, I've heard him say that he thought the very gods must laugh to see us worshipping straw idols for seventy seconds between two oceans of the dark."

"That has been said before," said Margaret, inwardly repelling the ruthless grip of reality upon her heart which enforced the truth of the phrase.

"Yes, by millions," Savile assented. "But he felt it. He lived face to face with death, and believed it to mean extinction. Now do you see why he never spoke about his wife?"

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"What a frightful creed!" said Margaret, shivering.

"It's possible to live in that creed, though, without going mad. I have done it."

Savile's tone was matter of fact to the last degree. Margaret's eyes put the question which she hesitated to frame in words.

"No, not now: I've fought my way out of it now. You've got to get things straight, you know, by looking about you with your own human eyes. And it's written everywhere— Laws of symmetry, don't you know? Oh, you'd realise it fast enough if you came to walking through a dead city. It was the stones of a porphyry pavement, worn into a channel by the feet of a dead and gone civilization that came together to pray, that taught me to feel that there must be some—some end to it all, don't you know? Yes—it sounds sketchy, but in point of fact it's as firm as a rock. One can live in it and die in it—a faith like that. It gets built up in you, don't you know? Or you get built up in it."

"But you go to church, don't you?"

"Yes: why not? It's the best, I expect. The best faith wins all along the line. Ages and faiths decay, but the faith of the age is the best for that age. And what do your own Scriptures say? '*The Kingdom of Heaven is within you.*' That's the broadest faith I know: broad enough to take even the dead folk who walked over that porphyry pavement."

"Do you like violet hangings for Lent?" asked Margaret.

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Savile shrugged his shoulders, with his queer, tolerant smile. "Well, they're not exactly essential. Still, why not? Let the letter go with the spirit, provided only the letter doesn't go before the spirit. Besides, for the mass of men rites and ceremonies are a necessary means of interpretation. Depend upon it, Paul was in the right of it when he said he would eat no meat while the world stood, sooner than offend a weaker conscience by his spiritual freedom. Now I'm talking like a prig! Why on earth didn't you stop me?"

"You're not, you're not," Margaret assured him eagerly. "I'm delighted to hear what you say. It was only the other day that I had quite a quarrel on just such a point with a man who asked me whether I considered green offertory bags or embroidered stoles or soup-tickets to be the more efficacious means of grace."

"Rather a cheap sneer, wasn't it? I should think he was young, your friend."

"He hadn't even that excuse," said Margaret with indignation. "And I do like him, too, nearly always. It was some one you know quite well, I think, though I don't think you like him: Mr. Christian Yarborough."

At the mention of that name, Savile shut up visibly, like a telescope: his brow contracted, his mouth set and hardened. "Oh, I know *him* well enough," he said, not troubling to disguise his sentiments: "too well, in fact."

Not unnaturally, Margaret was moved to take the part of the absent. "Clever men make so many

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enemies," she said, in that soft cat's voice which almost all women know how to use as a most potent weapon. "I know he is not popular: we are almost his only friends."

"Miss Carew, you must not think—" Savile was beginning hastily, when the door opened and Althea came in.

"Margaret, which was the day we promised to go to the Anselms?" she inquired, in her pretty infantine treble. "Because I've mislaid my book of engagements, and I can't find it anywhere; and Mrs. Anselm is so frightfully particular, though she's really a very sweet thing: but I suppose you can't help that when your uncle is a duke. I don't know what I should do without Margaret, Mr. Savile, she has quite a head for things like that. Sometimes she reminds me that people are among my most particular friends when I've really quite forgotten it myself!"

VIII

WHAT WERE FOOLS MADE FOR, BUT TO BE CHEATED?

WITH the first warm and sunshiny days of July, Althea left London for the hills of Surrey, taking Margaret with her, but leaving her husband, who was detained by his ambiguous duties. Althea, however, begged those few of her friends who remained in town to come down and see her whenever they could get away, and they took her at her word, especially Savile, who considered his reelection almost as safe as in the old days of pocket-boroughs. Yarborough also, finding himself compelled by public opinion to observe the Sabbath, sorely against his will, paid flying visits to Moor End on Sunday mornings, and so got Margaret's image forever associated with broad chalk downs hallowed by a warm haze of sunshine, where flocks of sheep, grazing after the tinkling bell of their leader, flecked the green hill-side like patches of summer cloud. When the shadows grew long, and the wind came in wandering breaths of coolness, under a sky purified by falling dew, where the daffodil mist of sunset rose into a spirit-land of clearer emerald, and thence through hyacinthine pallor into the amethyst of the mid-heaven and the shadowed blue of the east

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where early stars take light, then it was time for him to quit Margaret's side, and hurrying back to the great city plunge anew into the energy of midnight toil. Margaret received the alternate visits of these rival luminaries with her customary equable sweetness: she could not help seeing that they were in love with her, but she did not take any notice of the fact. Althea called her a flirt, but she was wrong: Margaret was simply undecided, and cool as a rock-lily. Her heart did not beat any faster, neither did she blush, nor lose one iota of her normal self-control when either of her lovers drew near. She was half afraid that she would have to send them both away, which she did not want to do, not so much because she disliked dependence on Althea as because of an inward thirst after depth and self-reliance of emotion. Margaret's life was so shallow that she had got into a bad habit of taking soundings every day; and she was disgusted by the triviality of her own feelings. Grateful affection towards Althea, contempt and irritation blended against Frederic Carew, a starved and apathetic hunger after art and beauty, and an ignoble tendency to leave things as they were, made up the sum of her mental life, so far as she could read herself: and her insurgent heart spent itself in prayer for an awakening. By earning her own living she might have gained physical independence, but that was not what she wanted: she had a hundred a year of her own which, scanty though it was, relieved her of material obligation, for she paid £80 into the Carew exchequer and kept the balance

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to dress on. She was haunted by the ghostly insignificance of her daily life: it is all very well to talk of seeing the infinite in the every-day, but if one descends to particulars it is hard to find any symbol of eternity in the discussion of feminine frocks, masculine dinners, and hermaphroditic scandal. No sentimental school-girl ever longed more heartily than Margaret for the touchstone of a real passion. She was not anxious to preserve her delicately balanced foothold, but would have given all she had to be out of her depth in summer torrent or mountain-guarded lake.

Meanwhile the elections seemed likely to go steadily against the Conservatives. Every morning added to the chronicle of their probable defeats, and Conservative editors exhausted themselves as well as their readers in trying to discover local circumstances which might be made to account for the issue. It was evident that the country meant to put the Liberals in power, and responsible men looked blank while they asked each other what was to be done. The last of the great Liberals had been dead five years, and as yet no one had arisen to take his place. Mallinson's name was mentioned for the premiership, but Mallinson's friends shook their heads: he liked a seat in the House, and had owned that the Exchequer held its fascination for his magnificent brain, but for anything further he had neither ambition nor capacity. Foreign diplomacy was a sealed book to him, except so far as it affected his theories of finance: as to war, it was his abhorrence, and he only knew enough of it to hate it.

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Hammersley, on the other hand, would have liked supreme power: but then Hammersley was so extremely and radically disagreeable that no Cabinet could be expected to work with him. Other men were spoken of, who had been great, or might be expected to become so: but Lord Hayes declared emphatically that he did not know anybody except himself or Lord Ferdinand who was fit to hold office for a day, or likely to hold it at all, however badly, for a week. There remained Mr. Wemyss, who never had been nor would be anything but mediocre; and it was on him that expectation finally centred. With an able Cabinet, and an intolerably able private secretary, it was supposed that he might manage to get along respectably. His morbid apprehensiveness, it was hoped, would merely act as a chronic drag upon the wheels of his party, and prevent them from doing anything in particular: of course, if a crisis arrived, things were likely to go rather badly: however, the political horizon was at present remarkably clear, and it was hoped that the charioteer would have nothing to do except sit on his bench with the reins in his hands, and if he liked go to sleep. And anyhow, there was nothing else to be done: and the only man was necessarily the best man.

They forgot, however, to reckon with Mr. Wemyss's asthma, which was really an important factor in the situation. He was nearer seventy than sixty, and had never been strong; he liked the notion of being premier, but he was also horribly afraid of it; and though his spiritual nature enjoyed the pros-

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pect of becoming a martyr to duty, his weaker self urged him to be content with that cheaper kind of halo which is got by telling your neighbors that you have been ordered by your doctor to say No to the most flattering proposals on the part of illustrious personages. In this state of indecision, he showed himself feverish, vain, exacting, suspicious, and despairing by turns: and Yarborough, although outwardly he had to be all suppleness and conciliation, got inwardly so exasperated that he would have liked to shake his venerable leader till his teeth rattled in his head: which indeed they would readily have done. The worst of it was that he knew himself to be simply building castles in the sand, which the tide might at any moment wash away: and indeed it did very often wash away their trenches and outworks, and then all the arguments had to be gone over again, and Mr. Wemyss screwed up to his duty. Fortunately, however, Mr. Wemyss stood in great awe of his secretary, having once or twice felt the lash of Yarborough's terrible tongue: he never dreamed of giving any orders, or making demands upon Yarborough's time, but took what he was given without murmuring, and gave such obedience as can be got from an invertebrate animal. But what would happen if he were left to himself for twenty-four hours, Yarborough dared not think.

So the warm days slid by, and Savile's brow grew clouded, as the citadels of Conservatism fell fast into the enemy's hand. Mallinson was sure to get in for his native division of the North Riding: Hammers-

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ley, unwilling to court defeat in his own borough, was glad to take Yarborough's offer of the Yarborough interest at Chanston, with the prospect of winning it unopposed. It is not to be supposed, however, that he was grateful: on the contrary, he bore a special grudge against Yarborough from that day forward, though not the kind of grudge which would hinder him from accepting further favours. All this Savile saw without amazement, wondering what Yarborough meant to do: he reckoned up various hypotheses, but what Yarborough actually did do never entered his head. It was bad enough to find himself punished for making too sure of his own constituency by the springing up of a Liberal opponent, who, as he learned from his agent, was carrying everything before him: but when he got to the end of his letter and was confronted by the name of Christian Yarborough, he made use of expressions which fretted his uncle's sensibility.

"Pray, my dear Mainwaring, do not use such words," said Lord Ferdinand languidly, looking up from his newspaper. "No matter what has happened, it cannot possibly be worth your while to blaspheme."

"I'm sorry," said Savile with an effort. "Debenham writes that I am to be opposed at Whitney by that—that eminent politician Christian Yarborough."

"For myself I believe him to be an emissary of the Evil One, sent into the world by his master to catch the souls of men and the Conservative constituencies," Lord Ferdinand answered blandly,

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turning his sheet. "I am sorry for you, my dear boy. Does he appear to have any chance?"

"Chance? He makes chance. Debenham tells me he will sweep the votes. He sends me a copy of the fellow's address. He is holding a regular series of meetings, a regular campaign, you know."

"I suppose he attacks you in the spirit of Girardin attacking Armand Carrel—to advertise his own temerity."

Savile laughed grimly. "Oh, you mistake, sir: he's a tenfold more important man than I am. This confounded address of his, now— Well, he's a clever blackguard. His electioneering address will serve as a Liberal programme, I suppose. I shall be turned out, from what Debenham says: it's a malicious, shabby sort of trick."

"Do you say his address is ingenious?"

"I tell you it is the new Liberal programme—the programme on which they'll base their appeal to the country. There's no charlatanism in that: it will run through England like wildfire. If that's to be Wemyss's line, though, I pity poor old Randolph; he'll have hard work to live up to it."

Lord Ferdinand took the paper from Savile's hand and read it through attentively and in silence. Some minutes elapsed before he laid it down, with a grave, preoccupied air.

"Do you suppose that he wrote that letter himself, my dear boy?"

"There's not another man in the Liberal crew clever enough to write it."

"He must be a young man of truly exceptional abil-

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ities. This, Mainwaring"—Lord Ferdinand tapped the paper with his polished nail—"is a very remarkable manifesto. It betrays an extraordinary grasp of the situation. Depend upon it, this young man is at the back of much that has hitherto appeared inexplicable. I begin to trace his hand in many mysterious manœuvres of the past, and to fear his influence upon the issues of the future. I should certainly advise you to resort at once to the scene of action."

Savile did so, and found that much mischief had already been done. Yarborough got on very well with the electors of Whitney, in which the manufacturing element predominated, almost to the exclusion of any other interest. They were a keen-witted, amiable, suspicious race, not easily befooled, and still less easily patronised, given to asking questions and doubting their answers, practical democrats, free from the hereditary truckling of the labourer: men who would have died sooner than have touched their hats to a lord by daylight, but courteous to lonely women after sunset. A board-school education had made their mental vision short, but acute and fairly logical. Aptitude, industry, humour, courage, kindness, were virtues which they understood and prized: temperance was a laudable thing between Monday morning and Saturday afternoon, but became a matter of indifference in the interval: religion was all very well for those who liked it, always provided that they had not an eye to the clergyman's port-wine and half-crowns: age, sickness, death were improbable trifles which a man of spirit would scorn to take into his reckoning. To

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this blend of manly virtue and frightful irresponsibility many causes had contributed. For one thing, the mill-hands of Whitney were all convinced that the rich men of past ages had run up a long account with the poor, which was to be paid in full to the generation of to-day. Again, wages were good and pleasure was cheap, and hard work alternating with facile pleasure is capable of blunting the finest imagination. These men laboured without knowing the beauty of labour, and died tasting, but not communicating, the pang of death's bitterness and the world's futility. Among these keen, kindly, mutilated lives, Yarborough was more at home than Savile could ever be: he understood them better than they understood themselves, and pitied them, making excuses for them something in the way God makes excuses for us all. Savile gave them a sorrowful justice, and despised all that he was forced to condemn. Savile also felt himself to be of a different clay, but Yarborough proudly told them that his father had married a labourer's daughter, and that he, like themselves, was glad that he sprang from the primeval earth. He liked them better than he had ever liked his audience at Westminster, which vexed his arrogant soul by its pretension of equality. Here he spoke as a god: there he was hampered at every turn by depreciation and dislike.

Besides all this, Yarborough took delight, for their own sake, in intrigue and excitement and power: and he had his fill of them in those hot summer weeks. Savile found that his agent's letter had conveyed to his ear only an echo of the prelude to Yarborough's

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plan, with whose fuller harmonies all England was presently ringing. For Whitney turned out to be really only the centre-point of Yarborough's tour: he spoke at Birmingham, in Liverpool, in London half a dozen times a week: he ran up to Yorkshire to help Mallinson: he went to Lambeth to speak for Mr. Wemyss, who was opposed for the first time for eleven years, and took it very ill. The papers were full of his name, and Carteret in particular, mindful of past events, laid aside his sneering tone and devoted his leaders to a serious consideration of Yarborough's action and programme. All this was very agreeable to Yarborough, who felt like Byron after the publication of "Childe Harold": certainly Yarborough was as yet hardly famous, but every one was beginning to say he was sure to become so. The tone of his own party, too, was slowly but surely changing; Yarborough had long since begun to gather into his own hands the mass of Mr. Wemyss's correspondence, the countless threads of his political life, but of late the position seemed to be gradually reversing, like M. Jules Verne's balloon when it exchanged terrestrial for lunar attraction. Yarborough was fast becoming the virtual head of affairs, Mr. Wemyss no more than an ornamental cipher.

Between Savile and Yarborough there existed, of course, a keen personal rivalry which led occasionally to piquant incidents. Savile's trump card was ancestral and family influence, for the Saviles owned the greater part of Whitney, and Lord Ferdinand's great manor lay within a mile of the city. Yarborough, on the other hand, appealed to public affairs,

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and to the splendid promises of the new Liberal programme, as set forth in his own manifesto. Each held a good hand, but Yarborough played by more accommodating rules, which did not forbid him to act the part of the true sporting Englishman, anxious to fight fair and shake hands on the issue. Savile was inflexibly polite to his opponent. Yarborough, when thrown against his rival, went out of his way to show himself generous and genial. On these occasions Savile not infrequently lost his temper: and then it was pretty to see how Yarborough would first deprecate and then try to gloze over such a fault, and cover it up from the notice of their mutual supporters. And yet, in spite of the Lucifer-like cleverness with which Yarborough contrived to put Savile always at a disadvantage, the issue was still doubtful: for the men of Whitney knew Savile of old, while Yarborough was a stranger, a man nobody had ever heard of before in those parts. True, he spoke them fair; but what are fair words in election week? He had not lived among them, as Savile had done in his early childhood: there was no old lady in Whitney that could remember Mr. Yarborough with curls all over his head, eating green apples out of the blind apple-woman's stall—a freak of Mr. Mainwaring's at the age of six which naturally disposed his fellow-citizens to vote for him.

The crisis of the struggle fell on the eve of the polling day, in the last week of July, through the agency of Bell & Sons, the local printers: though it is but fair to say that compositors and proof-readers alike disclaimed all responsibility for the error, and

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vowed that Yarborough's own draught was in fault. However that might be, it was not found out till too late for any correction that notices had been issued of a public address to be given on Thursday the 28th, instead of Wednesday the 27th, at 8 P.M., in the large open square in the centre of the city, known as Savile Square out of compliment to some dead Savile. About mid-day Yarborough received a stiff note from Savile to the effect that a Conservative gathering had been arranged a week before for the same place, date, and hour, and asking whether Yarborough desired to provoke a riot. Yarborough took pleasure in the composition of his answer.

He wrote:

"DEAR SAVILE,—I would gladly change my place of meeting if it were possible, but I fear it is now too late. A little brusquerie is tolerated in an old friend, but from a stranger strict etiquette is demanded, and I can't afford to alienate any of my scanty supporters by acting in what they would probably call an off-hand way. This consideration need not, however, weigh with you in your far different position, and if you feel disposed to shift your quarters, pray do not hesitate to do so on my account. If you are nervous on the score of a riot, by all means call out the military: there are plenty of Tommies in the barracks, although if I might venture a word of advice I should recommend you to keep them in reserve, out of sight of the crowd. For myself, I fear neither political rivalry nor personal violence. Take my word for it (you know its value, and that my oath would be no more absolute security), that this astounding coincidence is due to a regrettable misprint, and that no one could more sincerely than myself regret any inconvenience to which it may put you.

"And believe me your sincere friend,

"CHRISTIAN AUGUSTINE YARBOROUGH."

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This letter, of course, effected nothing, except that it caused Savile to "blaspheme" with an energy which would have shocked Lord Ferdinand; and when the night of the 28th arrived, there was every prospect of an *émeute*. The meetings were fixed for eight o'clock, to facilitate a full attendance of mill-hands, who left work at six: but by half-past seven the square was already packed with a dense and cheerful crowd, fully alive to the possibilities of the occasion. The evening had fallen still, and gloomy as an evening of midwinter: the heated atmosphere trembled under a sallow, blighted fell of cloud, and flickerings of lightning played dumbly over the north. A platform had been erected in the open air, at the south end of the square, for Savile and his supporters: while Yarborough was to speak from the balcony of the Whitney Reform Club, a survival of the old Corn-Law days, which stood with its back to the north some hundred yards away. Savile drove up in a big barouche, accompanied by the mayor of Whitney, and several members of his own committee. He was greeted with a roar of cheers as he stepped upon the platform: but with the cheers were mingled groans and hooting, which he had never heard before in Whitney. Anger shook him, at the thought of the stranger who had set the hearts of his own people against him: for Savile, aristocrat though he was, liked to live among friends, and required loyalty in proportion as he gave faith. He looked across to see Yarborough, but the balcony of the Reform Club was empty. Apparently Yarborough meant to be late, or else his courage had

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failed him at the last. Punctually as the clock in the Town Hall on his left struck eight, Savile began to speak.

He was no orator, but he knew his audience, and was untroubled by nervousness: he was well acquainted with local interests, and knew how to introduce telling hits, and his rough, picturesque, conversational style carried more attraction for Whitney than any more elaborate flight of rhetoric. His voice too, was just what they liked: it was deep, quiet, and perfectly clear, carried far, and took an edge of satire which translated his meaning like a foot-note. He based his appeal largely on personal and local grounds, reminding his hearers of all that had been done for Whitney by his family: and it lent strength to his words that he was able to point to the Town Hall on his left, and to a free Hospital on his right, both gifts of his race. His own followers cheered at every pause, while the Liberals, with the somewhat cynical tolerance of a manufacturing city, allowed that there was a deal to be said on both sides: at all events, it would be a pity not to hear what young Savile had got to tell them—particularly as their own candidate was discourteously late, and matters would have seemed dull indeed, but for that calm racy voice launching anecdote, satire, chaff, and personality impartially over their heterogeneous ranks. Savile was reassured: he had feared a *fracas*, for which he must blame his own obstinate pride as much as Yarborough's trickery. No doubt Yarborough had been playing a mere game of bluff, provoking an impossible position in the hope that Savile

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would be the first to give way. Savile having held to his post, Yarborough had been forced to retreat, and the honours of the day lay with Savile. He passed from personal to political topics, and gave a rapid sketch of all that the Conservatives hoped to do: contrasted their sober and modest aims with the wild chimeras of the Liberals; and appealed to his audience, as practical men, to say which party was the more likely to be able or willing to keep its promises. He drew a striking parallel between the Liberal party and a local electric-tram company, which, after placarding the town with advertisements, got out of gear in the first twenty-four hours of its existence, careered madly down the High Street, and upset several influential citizens through a plate-glass window into a confectioner's shop. At this point the clock struck nine, and Savile had the gratification of hearing himself cheered by every section of his mercurial audience. Slightly raising his voice, he resumed as soon as silence fell again.

"After all, gentlemen, we needn't go out of our way to find an example. We've got one before us, haven't we? That excellent company did the best it could for you: it meant well, though it didn't act up to its intentions. But for us the question is not so much whether the Liberal party can do all it promises, as whether it will do all it can. If you want to get at the rule you must look at the example. Here we are all met together to-night, and I can't flatter myself that you all came to listen to me. I'm no orator" (cries of "Yes, you are!")—"thank you, gentlemen, but I know very well that

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I am not. Many of you came to listen to a far better speaker than I am." (Roars of delight from those near the platform, who began to catch his drift.) "But you see the wonderful speaker didn't turn up, and so you had to take what you could get, and you took it with patience and courtesy, and made the best of things, like Englishmen as you are. Now that's the way with the party of our honourable friends. They promise us something very splendid in the way of a programme: but what's the good of it all if they don't keep their promises? Now, gentlemen, I'm not one of those that would pull down every government that doesn't do all it promises. You know as well as I do that all promises are conditional, in fact a kind of prophecy, and sometimes they can't be kept, and it would be a bad thing for the country if they were. Look at Sir Robert Peel, now—he was a Corn-Law Conservative, but he had to go dead against his promises to repeal the Corn-Laws, and all practical men honour him for his pluck. But as long as a promise can be kept without doing evident harm to the country, which has a greater claim on us than any party, so long the men who made it are bound to carry it out. Now do the Liberals keep their promises like that? I ask you, do they? I ask it of those gentlemen who came together to-night to hear what my friend Mr. Yarrowborough had got to say to them—"

He was interrupted by such a storm of mingled cheers and hooting, the latter directed exclusively against the defaulter, that for some minutes he could not go on. During this enforced pause, Sa-

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vile's eyes wandered over the upturned faces of his supporters, and fixed upon a cluster of men who were fighting their way down one of the steep and crowded alleys which led to the opposite side of the square, hard by the solid rectangular block of the Reform Club. They left a wake of amazement, visible to Savile in dumb-show, and of some other emotion less easy to distinguish. As the tumult of applause died away, the sound of their voices became audible, and the confused murmur of the crowd as it parted to let them through. Shouts of "Make way there! Let them pass!" fell on his ear, and he became aware that he had lost his hold of the mob. All eyes were straining to see, all ears to understand, what was happening there at the back of the crowd. Some, gathering only that Yarborough had arrived at last, began to groan or hiss; but they were quickly silenced as the cry was raised: "He's hurt! He's had an accident! He couldn't get here before." Then the crowd fell back, leaving a narrow lane, down which Yarborough walked rapidly, white as death, and leaning on Cecil Carteret's arm.

Instead of sympathy, Savile felt the rise of ungovernable anger. Not only decency forbade him to go on, but it would have been impossible to do so: no one was listening to him or thinking about him: The facile interest of Whitney was engaged on the side of that most picturesque of martyrs. As Yarborough vanished within the doors of the Reform Club, the mayor came and touched Savile on the arm.

"Would it not be better to suspend the meeting

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as a sign of sympathy with Mr. Yarborough's misfortune?" he asked, in a prim, well-bred whisper. "It seems so very unfortunate after what has just passed. Not, of course, that you were in the least to blame, Mr. Savile: but still—"

Savile turned on him, forgetting discretion in the disgust evoked by that unhappy turn of phrase. "Accident? Misfortune?" he sneered. "Mr. Yarborough is very lucky in his accidents."

Mr. Fearon was a delicate fair-haired man, vague in his opinions, tepid in emotion, a devotee of prudence and propriety. He blinked like an owl in daylight under this douche of strong scorn, which served only to turn his neutrality into obstinacy: for the delicacy of his sentiments was rarely questioned in Whitney; and Mr. Fearon felt affronted, as well as offended by the vulgarity of such an outburst.

"You will of course act as you think best, sir," he declared, with an exaggeration of his former chill precision. "But I am sure you will agree with me that it would be inadvisable to give publicity to such a taunt, unless it were possible to substantiate the implication which it carries in some more definite way."

Savile had got back his self-control and was about to make his apology, when a sudden thunder of cheering caused him to turn and look forward. Yarborough had stepped through the French window of the Reformers' smoking-room, and was standing on the balcony, the focus of all eyes. Darkness was now beginning to fall, but an electric star burst out suddenly from a lamp set in the front of the sound-

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ing-board above his head, and illuminated the ivory pallor of his features: it streamed also over the faces of the listening multitude, and momentarily dimmed the white streaks of wizard-fingered lightning that still flickered among the dark-banked vapours of the north. Yarborough's dress was in some disorder, and he carried his arm in a sling: his voice—for he began to speak at once, without waiting for the formality of an introduction—was so low that the people held their breath to hear him, and Savile himself felt the power of that tacit constraint, and was compelled to be silent, to look on dumbly at a drama in which, till now, he had been the chief actor.

Yarborough began by apologising for his want of punctuality. He had been speaking that afternoon, he explained, at a meeting in Poplar, and had got into trouble with his audience, which proved to consist mainly of Radicals of the old-fashioned type, undisciplined individualists, tenacious of an outworn creed, to whom the name of Liberal imperialism was synonymous with apostacy. He lightly indicated what had passed: it seemed that a riot had sprung up, in which some of his friends were severely handled: in his own case, however, little damage had been done except to his clothes, which he had been forced to drive home and change, thus missing his train at Victoria. Despite the lateness of the hour, he meant none the less to trespass on the patience of his friends, if they would show their usual consideration towards a reluctant defaulter.

“Mr. Yarborough means,” said Carteret, coming

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suddenly to Yarborough's side, and resisting Yarborough's efforts to check him, "that relying on the good faith of his audience, he went to Poplar alone, without police escort: that he spoke to a hostile mob for close on two hours, and kept them all quiet by sheer pluck and eloquence, and when at last the platform was rushed by an organised gang, he and half a dozen others who had the decency to stand by him fought their way to the door and got clear away down a side street: that he's suffering from a sprained arm, and bruised from head to foot, and that he means to speak to you till he drops."

The cheer that went up made the old houses ring again. Carteret's thin voice did not travel far, but his words were repeated from lip to lip through the crowd, till all were deeply penetrated with admiration, except indeed Savile, who had however the good sense not to repeat aloud his conviction that Yarborough was a charlatan, and a hypocrite. Things do not fall out so picturesquely without a little retouching, Savile argued: he could believe in the main fact of the riot, but not in Yarborough's pallor and suffering, nor in his personal gallantry, and least of all in his attempt to silence Carteret.

Yarborough spoke again after a minute, and with his first word silence fell. He said a few words in deprecation and denial of Carteret's testimony, then passed hurriedly from the unwelcome topic of his own affairs, and launched upon the broad sea of politics. Gradually his voice gained power and clearness: he spoke with remarkable fluency, and with an apt delicacy of phrasing. Each sentence was

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plain to the poorest wit, yet so framed as to charm the most critical. He dealt first of all with local interests, showing what Liberalism had done and might yet do for Whitney and places like Whitney: sketched boldly municipal organization, social reform, the practical millennium of the future: flung a word of generous praise to the personal honour and generosity of the Saviles, which caused their present representative to gnash his teeth, and then waved them into the past with an epigram of kindly, almost tender contempt for fallen idols. Thence he passed to public questions, and Savile heard for the first time an analysis of the methods and ideals of that policy of Liberal imperialism on which Yarborough's programme was based. Amended systems of naval and military organisation were sketched in broad dusk outline, as the lightning plays over a dark heath: over the question of foreign diplomacy Yarborough glided with rapid facility, vaguely impressive to the ignorant, but to the initiated, and Savile in particular, conveying a sense of miraculously detailed knowledge and foreknowledge: war and peace, colonial affairs, vexed questions of the day were dealt with in a series of pithy ironic epigrams, adapted to the hour and the audience, and yet so packed with thought that Savile felt that he might profitably spend the night in their elucidation. And still behind the lucid brilliant tones that in little space said so much, there was the feeling that much more remained unsaid: Yarborough had not got nearly to the bottom of his sack, he was but taking the coined money from its mouth.

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Rich corn, food of the starving, was treasured there against the day of need.

Perplexed and fascinated, Savile was content to make one of Yarborough's audience. But he was not prepared for a break and change in the orator's charm, when, after a terminal pause, Yarborough took up his parable anew and spoke as no one had ever heard him speak before. His face, lit by the falling light, became transfigured, translucent, unearthly: and his voice too was transfigured: angelically beautiful in its silver modulations, it seemed to strike upon the heart and brain through some medium less gross than that of the ear of flesh. Savile caught himself thinking, "That man must have a marvellous tenor," and that was his last conscious thought before he was rapt, as all were rapt, into a new world where nothing lived except that silver voice and the divine ideal of which it sang. For Yarborough was portraying the empire—a hackneyed theme enough: but he painted it as St. John painted the new Jerusalem. Great oratory, like great music, has this whirlwind power, and convinces us against our will. But it must be sincere, sun-clear, as the Greeks said, or the after-fall will be great in proportion to the exaltation. The empire of Yarborough's dream was a veritable queen of the sea, a daughter of the morning star, a goddess excellently bright: but she was more than that to her creator: it seemed that she was his very soul. It was the shrine of his life that he laid bare, where abstract empire sat throned within a living Holy of Holies.

"Carteret, Carteret, give me some brandy!"

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Yarborough was leaning against the balustrade, white, and deadly faint. Lightning flickered in the dark sky: the clock was striking ten. He had spoken for an hour, without any one being aware of the falling dark. A shudder went over the multitude, and there was an appreciable pause of universal awakening, as men came back from under that intense dominion, and, turning, looked in each other's faces. In that first dissolving instant no one thought of Yarborough, but in a moment later, as the cramped minds relaxed, all turned towards him again, with keenest human pity and reverence. A sound which was like a sob broke from them, as they saw him sink against Carteret, his lax hand slipping from the balustrade. Yarborough did not faint: he drank off the raw brandy which Carteret held to his lips, and stood up. No one spoke: he waved his hand to the fixed multitude, threw his arm round Carteret's neck, and went in-doors. Understanding that they were dismissed, the assemblage began to disperse quietly, melting away into the darkness by twos and threes, and talking over the events of the evening in voices still lowered long after they were out of ear-shot.

Savile was among the first to go, breaking away from the mayor and the committee, who thought his conduct rather strange. The last word of Yarborough's speech timed the last moment of his enchantment: "Damned charlatan!" was his earliest inward cry. In his first violent revulsion he felt as if he had never truly known or hated Yarborough before: but there he did himself an injustice: ha-

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ted is a plant of slow growth in educated minds, and its seeds had been implanted long ago. Any form of external compulsion was foreign and distasteful to Savile, but of all tyrannies that of emotion was the most disgusting. He felt he could never forgive his own weakness, but still less could he forgive Yarborough's strength. He was convinced that the whole episode was but a piece of acting: a fact here and there might be true, but not all that gloss of colour and sensation and pathos. Yarborough was a hypocrite in his oratory, a liar in his courage, a charlatan most of all in that last poignant cry of bodily distress: and Savile detested him with every fibre of his nature.

"Did I do it well, Carteret?" asked Yarborough, lying back wearily in his chair. "Did I win them—the fools?"

"Thee's a deal too fond of calling other people fools," said Carteret, with some natural resentment: he had himself been greatly moved.

"Ah, but did I?" Yarborough repeated. "Tell me: it's my last cast. To-morrow I win or lose—so very much, so much more than you, any of you, can understand."

"Well, I think thee wins," said Carteret, glancing at him doubtfully: "but I'll be hanged if I know precisely what thee wants to win."

"I play for high stakes," Yarborough answered. "And I win, do I? They were properly impressed by that final bit of pathos?"

"Did thee do it on purpose?"

"What—that cry for help? Good Heavens! do

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you think I could not have wound up my speech and got in-doors if I had liked? No, my friend: it is the part of the audience to be carried away, like that fool Savile, whom I saw out of the tail of my eye. He will not love me any the better for this," Yarborough ended, laughing grimly.

"Thee acts very well," said Carteret, in non-committal tones, and with his back turned.

"I act well, granted: but it's the fertility of my own intellect that I admire most," said Yarborough. His eyes were almost deliriously bright and he avoided moving, but his voice had its full sarcastic inflections, and he showed no other sign of weakness. "That row in Poplar, now, was a stroke of genius: I had to do something to brand my own mark on them deeper than the stamp of the hereditary magnate, and I flatter myself I've done it."

"Perhaps thee never went near Poplar, after all?"

"Perhaps I have not got a sprained arm, or am not black and blue with bruises. Why, you fool! do you think I'm going to play Othello and not black myself all over? Cheap success is only another name for failure. Do you think I would risk discovery through a blabbing doctor, or a chance free movement of a soi-disant wounded arm?"

"But you went to Poplar on purpose?"

"I went in the strength of my integrity and in the innocence of my faith. It was risky, of course: but the crown of martyrdom was always an expensive article. And I knew they would not kill me, they have not the pluck for that: besides, I carried a brace of loaded revolvers. I was more afraid I

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should not screw them up to danger-mark, after all. I had to give them two hours of the most exacerbating doctrines I could lay hand on, before they would do what was expected of them. Lord, what fools!" He laughed again. Carteret turned, came to his side, and stood looking down at him. There were pity and affection in that glance: but there was also a look of judgment, which had the effect of sobering Yarborough's mood of somewhat hysterical triumph.

"Christian, my lad, was it all acting?" he asked, with a deep note of earnestness in his voice. "When thee talked about England, was that acting too?"

Christian looked up and met those pleading eyes, with a full, reckless, brilliant glance. "You ask too much," he said. "I serve the England which makes me premier."

"Then God forgive thee for a charlatan," said Carteret quietly, as he turned away. "But I sha'n't throw thee over for that."

IX

THE LAUREL CROWN

EVENING again, thirty hours later. In paths of clear sky, between tracts of filmy vapour, the larger constellations glitter like diamonds: smaller stars are quenched by the moon, which walks in silver, her shining disk scarcely obscured by the cobwebs of silver-lighted cloudland. Whitney sleeps, here and there a lamp burning: in the old Town Hall, so lately the scene of noise and excitement, every light is extinguished. Carteret, unable to compose his nerves after a day of uproar, is responsible for one of those lamps that glimmer behind lowered blinds, but Savile's window is dark. Is he asleep? Perhaps: perhaps not. He has to get used to the sense of defeat, never very easy to a Savile: and he has been haunted all day by forebodings of a more intimate contest in which he will not come off victorious. Possibly at this hour he lies awake cursing Yarborough, who has won his birthright, and doubtless has designs upon the blessing also. Estcourt, who came down by a morning train in a saloon smoking-carriage, is sleeping assuredly: he has been pelted with rotten eggs by mistake for an unpopular county councillor, and does not intend to come down to Savile's elections another time.

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He has been smoking in bed, and his meerschaum lies on a little table close to his pillow; beside it lie also a novel of De Maupassant with a leaf turned down, a glass of whisky and soda-water, and a tiny phial and syringe. O incorrigible idler, as well asleep as awake, with what a cold incongruous lustre does the pure moonlight flicker over that suspicious little phial, evoking no sparkle from its brown depths! Estcourt does not care two straws about the issue of this or any other contest: so let him sleep on.

On the up platform of Whitney station, so crowded by day, a solitary passenger stands waiting for the night express, which comes in with the *élan* of a four-in-hand, bursting out of the night, streaming with lights of gold and opal smoke against the indigo blue of the sky. The station wakes to a sleepy activity: a handful of sleepy travellers descend, and their luggage is huddled out upon the platform: shivering in the cold, two-o'clock-in-the-morning air, they gather together their senses and their rugs. The solitary passenger for London springs into the carriage they have just quitted, but awkwardly, fumbling at the door: one arm is useless, and the face lifted in the moonlight is unnaturally pale, as if with sickness. A friendly giant of a porter, coming to help him in, gives a start of surprise, and touches his cap in an awkward, dubious way: he has good cause to know those imperious eyes, which a few hours ago looked down from the balcony of the Town Hall over a crowd which seemed as if it would never leave off cheering.

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"Beg pardon, sir—didn't know 'twas you, sir," he stammers.

"Or you would not have ventured to lift me in your arms like a baby? Dearest fellow, I kiss your hands! Thrice blessed is the ignorance which spares me pain."

So perfect is the mimicry of Edmund Yarborough's words and manner, that Christian ends in a fit of wild laughter: but he has the joke to himself, for the train slides out of the station, and George the porter goes off to confide to Simpson the guard, with the euphuistic delicacy of his class, a conviction that Mr. Yarborough, though he does pretty well on a platform, is either not all there or half seas over.

On, on through the sleeping country, through the long panorama of field and hedge-row mapped out in blue and silver: whistling through a slumbrous hamlet, plunging with a shriek into the black concavity of a tunnel, shot like an arrow through the murk of a deep cutting, throbbing with slackened tramp along the height of a balustraded embankment: on, with flying locks of smoke threaded with flame, till the lights of London are in sight, and under that pale, familiar glow the labouring engine leaps, one might fancy, more eagerly forward to the great city of labour. Yarborough had fought and won, had worked like a slave from gray dawn to gray midnight: victory lay with him. Savile was defeated, and Christian Yarborough, the incalculable marvel, yesterday unknown, to-day a charterless comet, to-morrow—who knows?—a fixed star of the first magnitude: Yarborough the charlatan, the

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wizard, the Mercury of lies and winged sandals, had at last got himself fairly approved by an astonished fatherland. Throughout the day he had played a mercurial part, confounding Savile's solid arguments and somewhat proud persuasions with those gracious foreign arts of charm and banter which Savile condemned as bad form. He was the keen sportsman, of course intensely anxious to win, but ready to lose with a good grace and shake hands with his rival. Deep beneath the ebb and flow of ambition, his inmost soul lay calm as the rocky bed of the sea, and he carried, immured by strength of will in the remoter cells of his brain, a conviction of the worthlessness of human life, which begins in swaddling bands and ends in worms' meat. But as the day wore on, the excitement of fighting and acting gained on him, and led him into acts and speeches of dramatic recklessness, which puzzled his electors, as they had puzzled George the porter. The crisis meant so much to him, so much more to him than to his rival. If Savile lost now, place was sure to be made for him at the first ensuing bye-election: but if Yarborough were to fail, after the naïve grandeur of his challenge to power and possession, he would be not only beaten, but laughed at. Yarborough hated to be laughed at, and his fingers were itching to get hold of the reins: he felt himself able for any task to-day: seven years hence he might be mad, or dead, or, worst of all, forgotten. No doubt his view was exaggerated, but for him it was real: and that night at ten o'clock, when the votes were counted, and he heard that he had won, he was crazed with

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triumph: Herod-like, he took himself for a god. In his subsequent speech from the balcony he abandoned himself to the rapture which a born orator feels in delicately handling his audience: fortunately, however, the most of it was drowned in cheers, and in the audible parts luck or instinct preserved him from any signal indiscretion. But he did not know, and never could remember, what he said: he, who generally rode his emotions on the curb, was carried away to madness by the fustian triumph of an election! All in a moment, of course, followed the reaction: he woke up, sane and sober, cold and sick. The plaudits and the shouting dwindled, the glory faded, the god became a man again, and, manlike, suffered in the transition. What awakened him? The familiar vision of Edmund Yarborough's face looking at him out of the night, a pale satiric commentary on his ill-gotten triumph. The orator faltered and was dumb.

They said he was over-tired, and Carteret coming forward took him away and sent him to bed. As soon as he was left alone he got up, slipped out of the house by a back window (at imminent risk of being arrested for burglary), and made his way to the station, where the London train was due at two o'clock. This was madness, and he knew it, but dimly: he was physically in a fever. Amid the urgent preoccupation of bodily pain and weakness, one thought, one desire, one resolve had got hold of his will: to see Margaret Carew, and lay his laurels at her feet.

Madness: but Yarborough did nothing by halves.

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This passion was strong in proportion to the strength with which he had thrust away the very thought and image of Margaret, during the weeks of the struggle at Whitney. After all, he had done what he had meant to do, he had won his seat, and could not be robbed of it: he might make a fool of himself now, if he chose. Fevered, reckless, with passion surging luxuriously in every vein, he could not help feeling that it was a fine thing that he should come literally blood-stained from the battle-field to lay his trophies at Margaret's feet. Such love-making is out of fashion nowadays, and it was extremely unlikely that Savile would ever do anything so remarkable and so magnificent. Yarborough, with that phrase about the laurels ringing over and over in his head, still partly haunted by a glory of divinity, partly in a mood of quintessential cynicism which scoffed at himself, and Savile, and the world and all that was in it except Margaret—Yarborough felt that such a *coup d'état* was the only act worthy of him at such a crisis. His politic second self, too, which never would let him forget the dramatic value of his own actions, even pointed out that many people, if it got known, would probably remark, "How touching! How charmingly old - fashioned!" and that in this way he might win the sympathies of an audience which he had never touched before. So to Moor End Yarborough must go, there to play the god before Margaret, and take her by storm.

Night at a great London station: twilight, the hour of death, as he swung out again, but less rapidly, into the shadowy gray of the country - side.

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The moon fell to her setting: the stars withdrew as daylight slowly broadened in the lucid morning skies. Quiet flowers drenched in dew lifted their pale closed faces, like a congregation of tiny ghosts, towards the breaking dawn. Light quickened: shadows stole softly into being from the tall, rounded elms over the drenched grasses, brushed down by the dew as if stroked by some giant hand: the interspaces of the clouds were tinged with aerial blue. Then came the sun, and night was over: in pale blendings of light and vapour, in flower-like luminous harmonies of pearl and blue and pink and lilac, day came back to the awakening earth. How heavenly peaceful it was! Yarborough sat by the open window, and the morning coolness breathed on him in dew and fresh smells and chilling wind. He shivered, and in finding himself cold awoke to the fact that he was still in evening dress. For the first time it occurred to him that he was hardly in trim for a morning call, with his bandaged arm marked with two or three spots of blood, his incongruous clothes, and general air of dissipation. But the phrase about the laurels covered all that: one does not quarrel with the soldier for wearing his war-stained uniform. After a couple of changes, he reached Moor End at seven o'clock, creating an immense sensation on the little platform, with its border of cabbage-roses and Canterbury-bells. However, as he seemed to know what he was about, and walked straight, and gave up a first-class ticket, they let him go. It took him an hour to climb the steep sandy road over the downs, but he reached his bourne at last, fold-

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ed in a long hollow on the ridge of the purple, wind-swept moor: quitting the road, he scrambled over the fence, ran down between the red shafts of the beleaguering firs, and broke through into the rose-garden at the end of the lawn.

There lay the quaint white house, steeped in summer calm, between rich woods: the wild cool smell of the firs and thymy downs blended with the perfume of mown grass and budding roses. But he saw with a cool shock of surprise that nearly all the upper windows were closed, and the blinds drawn down, for the Carews did not breakfast till well after nine, as indeed he might have guessed, knowing Althea. His heart sank: he did so want to see Margaret. He felt that between the pathos of his sickness (for he knew now that he was sick) and the glamour of his triumph, Margaret really ought to find him irresistible. Suddenly his prayer was granted: one of the long windows of the dining-room was thrown open, and Margaret appeared on the threshold.

Yarborough's breath came in gasps: he felt suffocated. The blood drummed in his ears. Margaret came slowly across the lawn towards the rose-bed, gathering her pale muslins high above the sparkling turf. Yarborough pressed back under a blue-black branch of cedar. She stepped into a winding path of grass between the roses: and no sooner was she out of sight of the house, than he stepped forward and stood before her, baring his head.

"Margaret, I've come—" he began.

Margaret stood perfectly still, looking at him.

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Recognition and partial understanding came to her simultaneously, in the first glance: the best way to act was the afterthought of a moment. "To your friends," she finished quietly, and going up to him she took his hand into her cool grasp. "I'm so sorry to see you looking so ill. Please come and lie down."

Half sobered by her touch, Yarborough dimly perceived the absurdity of what he was doing: yet he still clung desperately to the thing he had meant to say. "Listen," he said: "you *must*. I came to say I've won. I'm member for Whitney. I came to tell you." He had now laid his laurels at her feet: was it possible that she could remain unmoved?

"I'm very glad to hear it," Margaret said, calmly leading him forward, "but you shall tell me about it by-and-by. You aren't well, you know, and you mustn't talk, and put yourself in a fever. To please me, you must come quietly away and lie down."

He let her lead him across the lawn; but by the time they gained the window he had pretty well got back his senses. And there he stopped, and stood looking at her out of his great splendid eyes: so weak yet strong, so kinglike yet enslaved that her balanced calm was shaken to its foundations, though she would not let him see it. He had won Whitney, he might win England, and he was in love with her, and ready to give her, in literal simplicity, the keys of his heart. What a field of ambition for Peggy Carew, aged twenty-seven, with a hundred a year in Consols! "Good God!" he said, "what am I doing here? I must have been crazy! Let me go back."

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"Nonsense, come in to breakfast," said Margaret. She made him come into the cool dark dining-room, and lie down on the sofa: breakfast, an irregular meal, was partly laid, and Margaret put a bunch of purple grapes into his hand. "I know you're thirsty," she said. "Eat those up, and don't dare get off that sofa while I'm away." She went out of the room, locking the door behind her to keep the servants out: she was sure Yarborough would stay where she had placed him. She went up to Althea's room, and found that little lady eating chocolates while her maid did up her hair.

"Send away your maid," said Margaret in French. Then, when she was alone with the astonished Althea, she told her story as baldly as she could.

"And he is down in the dining-room—actually, in our dining-room?" cried Althea, clasping her hands. "Good gracious, Margaret! My *dearest* girl!"

She sat aghast, amid her golden shower. Margaret came behind her and began methodically to gather and pin it up. She said no more, having really nothing to say.

"Good gracious, Peggy, how can you be so stolid?" Althea exclaimed, twisting round to look up into Margaret's equable face. "Of course, it's quite plain what it means."

"Don't twist, or you'll make me run these hair-pins into your head," said Margaret. "It means nothing, except that Mr. Yarborough isn't well, and will have to be looked after."

"It's the most romantic thing I ever heard of."

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"I wish he had got out of his evening dress," said Margaret. "The servants—"

"Bother the servants! I don't believe you've any heart at all."

"I dare say I haven't. I don't like sensations."

"But this is such a splendid one, and so complimentary to you!"

"No, it's silly: and Fred will be cross."

"After all, I don't see anything so very out of the way in it!" said Althea with sudden asperity. "Why shouldn't he come to breakfast? Mr. Savile did once."

"Not in evening dress."

"No, that's tiresome. Couldn't we lend him something of Fred's?"

Margaret laughed drily. "I should like to see him in Fred's trousers," she said. "Dear me, I hope I'm not vulgar. But they wouldn't come down to his ankles, you know, dear. He might get into Fred's overcoat, though," she added, buttoning Althea into a Parisian morning-gown. "And then we could smuggle him up into Fred's room, and make him lie down, while we sent for a doctor. None of the others are out of their rooms yet, which is a blessing."

"You're a perfect monster!" Althea said, her indignation somewhat impeded by the fact that Margaret was tying a chiffon bow under her dimpled chin. "You haven't a bit of heart, Peggy. I don't believe you mean to reward him, after all."

"He must be made to send a wire for his boxes the first thing. I'm rather glad you've got a house

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full of people, it will make it look more ordinary. Nobody need know exactly how or when he arrived. We must let Mr. Carteret know, too, or he'll be so anxious. I don't believe he left any message for him." Margaret had followed the course of the Whitney campaign with diligence. She had read the account of Yarborough's speech and Carteret's intervention, and had concluded that Mr. Carteret must be rather fond of him.

"Oh, Peggy, aren't you touched?" said Althea wistfully. "I should have been if Fred had done anything as silly as that for me: but he never did."

"Take your handkerchief, if you call that thing one, and come down," said Margaret with calm authority. "Take everything for granted: go in and shake hands, and stop him—stop him at the sword's point if he tries to apologise. Make fun of it, laugh it off, do anything but be serious. Then I'll bring in the overcoat, and we'll put him into it, and pack him off to bed. The door's locked, and here's the key. If you let him see that you understand that he—that I—that he came here for any particular purpose, I'll never forgive you!" She stood in the doorway, her strong young hand lifted in warning. "Are you going to obey?"

"I don't see why you should order me about in that military way," said Althea plaintively. "Of course that is just what I always meant to do. You needn't be afraid—I am the very *last* person likely to say an indiscreet word, or anything that might compromise your dignity." Althea relished the flavour of those diplomatic expressions. "But all

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the same, Peggy, I do think you might show that poor boy a little scrap of heart—that is, if you've got any."

"If," said Margaret, and went away to get the overcoat, smiling to herself, and yet a little dissatisfied. Was Althea right, after all? Was she unnaturally cold? She felt as if she could have been better pleased with herself if she had fainted, or gone into hysterics.

X

A CONFERENCE OF THE POWERS

“OH, Cecil Carteret! where are you going?”
“To Pierpont Street : and thyself?”

“I’m just coming away from it.”

“And couldn’t thee get anything out of that sleek valet of his?”

“Nothing. He doesn’t in the least know when Yarborough is coming back : hasn’t heard from him since he went down there.”

“And that’s ten days ago. The boy must be clean crazy.”

“He may be really feeling ill,” suggested Mallinson. Carteret shook his head impatiently, and, turning, fell into step by Mallinson’s side.

“I’ll walk a little way with thee. I take it thee and I look at this business in the same light—don’t we?”

“I certainly think it’s a great pity Yarborough should keep away just now,” said Mallinson, mildly, “if that’s what you mean. But after all, it’s Wemyss’s place to make a fuss, not ours. If Wemyss accepts his excuses—”

“Wemyss daren’t say he doesn’t,” put in Carteret drily.

“That’s not fair,” objected Mallinson. “Wemyss

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needn't keep him as his secretary if he didn't want to. And I'm sure Yarborough doesn't often get a holiday."

"Is this a time for a rational man to be thinking of holidays? Thee talks as if he were a bank clerk."

"Well, even if he isn't really ill—and you can't be sure that he's not, you know—it won't do him much harm, because everybody thinks he is. You and I and De Châtillon and Mrs. Carew and her cousin are the only people who can have any idea of it. No one found out down at Whitney."

"Small thanks to him for that!" growled Carteret. "A nice piece of work I had of it, explaining and apologising and soothing people down with nothing to go on but a sixpenny telegram."

"Well, you needn't have done it if you hadn't wanted to," Mallinson pointed out. "And I'm sure you're glad you did do it, aren't you? Without that, his defection would have been a far more serious affair; but as things stand I can't see that it matters so very much."

"He's got the ball at his feet, but thee can't see that it matters much whether he kicks it or not, provided he's got a good excuse? George Mallinson, I'm surprised at thee!" said Carteret severely. "Thee knows he's throwing away all his chances."

"Do you really think that?" Mallinson asked, with a thoughtful glance into Carteret's eyes. "Well, I named him to Hayes myself."

"Named him to Hayes! What for?"

"Oh, for any little thing that's going," said Mallin-

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son, blushing deeply. "Hayes and I were having a chat."

"He offered thee Downing Street, and thee refused it!" wailed Carteret, coming to a halt so abrupt that it brought about a collision in the rear, and upset an elderly citizen, bag and all, into the gutter. Mallinson hurried to pick up the victim, but Carteret stood wringing his hands on the pavement, absorbed in the contemplation of Mallinson's backslidings. "Well, if ever there was a tomnoddy—!" he went on, when Mallinson rejoined him. "I should just like to know why thee wouldn't take it?"

"Oh, I'm too old," said Mallinson cheerfully. "My mind's gouty. It only shows how hard up they must be."

"Of course they are! Hayes is pledged to an autumn session, and he can't face a hostile majority of a hundred and sixty, can he? It looks like a deadlock."

"Wemyss will have to take it. I shouldn't mind taking office under Randolph, though he is rather an—"

"Old foozle," suggested Carteret.

"Invalid, I was going to say," returned Mallinson with perfect gravity. "I doubt if his health would stand it: his asthma has been very bad since his private secretary ran away."

"I heard a rumour that he was going to apply for the Chiltern Hundreds," said Carteret. "If he does, there'll be a pretty kettle of fish! He's a terrible fool, saving your presence, but he's the only man that all sections of Liberal opinion would agree to

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support. That comes out of my leader this morning," he added, peering sharply at Mallinson through his spectacles.

"I know: I read it," said Mallinson placidly. "It didn't begin quite like that, though. After all, when you call Wemyss a fool, you use the word in a relative sense. You don't mean to deny him good average abilities: you only mean that he's not as clever as you are yourself. At least, that's what your chief would mean by it."

"My chief? I haven't got one."

"Christian Yarborough, I mean. Don't you think all sections might unite under him?"

"George Mallinson, art thee raving mad?" said Carteret, astounded, as he often was, by the independence and original force of character and keenness of observation which underlay Mallinson's quiet and unassuming manner. "Why, he's only a boy."

"He is older than Pitt was, and the tradition of government lies in his family: his father was a great man, and might have been anything he liked if he had not died so young. That counts for a good deal."

"Did thee say this to Hayes?" demanded Carteret sharply. Mallinson nodded. "Well, one thing's certain: he won't apply to thee again."

"He didn't! he never did. My dear Carteret, I hope you quite understand that nothing passed between us except the merest chat?" said Mallinson hastily, his sensitive modesty taking alarm in a moment.

"As a private individual, I should of course re-

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spect your confidence; as a politician, I may conceivably be called upon to violate it at the command of patriotism. How's that for a parody upon my illustrious chief, as thee calls him? Oh, is he mad, that boy? I could tear my hair to think of the chances he's throwing away," said Carteret bitterly. He had grown curiously fond of Yarborough since the *éclaircissement*: the weaker side of his nature found an attraction in Yarborough's lavish and cynical strength. "If he came back, I believe he could galvanise even that asthmatic mummy Wemyss into activity. As it is, they'll have to fall back on Maurice Fremantle."

"And why not Lord Fremantle? A very good man, I should say."

"Good man! good shadow!" cried Carteret, losing patience. "I wonder who thee'll be putting forward next? Thersites Hammersley, I suppose, or Mainwaring Savile, if he could be got to rat."

"Fremantle's very clever."

"Ay, that's the worst of him: he's nothing but clever. He's clever at writing, and clever at speaking, and his speeches are stuffed with as many clever catchwords as a topical song at the Empire: he's so clever that he's got eyes all round his head, and can see sixteen sides to every question. I think he's the cleverest man I know," said Carteret. "He's Mr. Facing-both-ways, that's what he is; and when all's said and done, he's got no more to do with practical politics than the man in the moon."

"I think you're hard on him. He's never had a

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free hand yet, you know," pleaded Mallinson. "He has the great gift of personal charm."

"Yes: and charm will make a man premier of England when we have women's suffrage, and not before," said Carteret. "Charm, indeed! Charm won't draught a workable scheme for the army—"

"No: your chief has done that," put in Mallinson smiling. "I pointed that out to Hayes."

"Thee did, did thee? And what did Hayes think?"

"Thought I was crazy," Mallinson confessed with a deprecating air: "but he seemed to be struck by what I said."

Carteret burst out laughing. "I dare say," he said, with a chuckle. "I'm very much struck by it myself. In fact, I— Who's that over there?"

They were coming up Whitehall as he spoke, and Carteret's short-sighted but observant eyes had detected a familiar figure amid a cluster of men on the opposite pavement. M. de Châtillon, flushed and heated, was talking at the top of his voice to a miserable *vaurien* seemingly of the pickpocket class, whom he had seized by the collar and refused to let go: a policeman stood by, with a tolerant but perplexed expression: and a crowd was gathering rapidly. Mallinson and Carteret ran across the street, and came up in time to hear the closing words of De Châtillon's harangue.

"Who steals my purse, steals tr-r-rash," he was saying, gesticulating with his free hand; "but he who steals my watch an' my chain, he steals what the Club des Frondeurs did me present. Ingrate

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perfidious, veritable infant of a nation of shop-lifters—”

Carteret came up behind him and tapped him on the shoulder. “I have something to say unto thee, friend,” he said in De Châtillon’s ear, “so let this wretch go.”

Constant wheeled about and met Carteret’s eyes, then took his hand from the pickpocket’s shoulder. “I make no charge, policeman,” he said, dropping his fantastic manner in a moment, together with the worst of his accent. “Depart thou, rascal. I am at your service, mes amis.”

The crowd dispersed as the pickpocket made off without more ado. The policeman, who betrayed some natural resentment, was cut short by Carteret, and otherwise pacified by Mallinson, and the three men moved on together towards Westminster.

“My dear De Châtillon, how can you be so ridiculous?” asked Mallinson laughing.

“It is droll, and it amuses me,” returned the Parisian, shrugging his shoulders. “What would you have, my dear man? But what has the little Carteret to say to his two friends?”

“We have been talking over this unlucky business of poor Yarborough being laid up,” began Mallinson: but Carteret thrust his discreet scruples impatiently aside.

“I tell thee he knows as much as we do. What we want to know is, how to get that fool of a boy back to London.”

“What will you have? A woman is like a wasp, she chooses always the finest fruit.”

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"A woman?" repeated Mallinson.

"Miss Carew, is it not so? Let us speak plainly, I beg of you. Iarbrou is in love—eh?"

"He's wandering about in the moonlight, and eating strawberries for tea," said Carteret bitterly. "And yet there's good stuff in him."

"They know him in Paris," said De Châtillon. "There is one little penny daily rag—you may have heard of it—the *Vie de Bohème*—"

"Go on," said Mallinson laughing. "We know it's a silly little paper."

"It is no good, but it is read," said the editor modestly. "And it has always had great thoughts of Iarbrou. Now, of course—" He shrugged his shoulders again and spread out his hands. "You have heard the last news, I dare say?"

"What news?"

"They say that M. Randolph has applied for the Chiltern Hundreds. It is perhaps false."

"It is quite likely to be true," said Mallinson gravely. "Good Heavens, what an awful deadlock!"

"Deadlock!" cried Carteret. "Thee means, what a maelstrom of chances! And he is out of it all, for the sake of a fool of a girl who doesn't even care for him! This is the wildest turn of Fate's wheel we've had yet. Anything might happen now."

"If it were six months later or six months earlier, it wouldn't matter," said Mallinson. "But he ought to stick to his post through the present crisis. You know, I *can't* think he's treated Randolph quite fairly."

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Neither Carteret nor De Châtillon could forbear laughing at the grieved reluctant air with which Mallinson put forward his rather obvious criticism. "Thee don't say so!" mocked Carteret. "George, thee astounds me! Thee shouldn't be so uncharitable."

"Don't be cynical: you're always abusing people. To hear you talk of Yarborough, any one would think he was the greatest rascal unhung."

"I dare say," said Carteret drily.

"Then what are you friends with him for?" Mallinson asked, with the air of one who scores a point in triumph.

"I don't know. What are you friends with him for, De Châtillon?"

"He is a droll of a boy," said De Châtillon, with an indulgent smile. "Besides, I have bet on him, and I desire to see him win."

"Thee needn't believe us if thee doesn't want to, George. There is more in it than that," said Carteret. "I love that lad, De Châtillon. I would give my right hand to get him away from that girl. I never had a son, you know. I looked forward to his career. I never cared the toss of a ha'penny about my own, but I fancied I could help him with his. He has youth and beauty and genius, and I'm old, and spent, and commonplace. I, like you, wanted to see him win."

"He has great ideals," said De Châtillon. "I would have had him win and fight for freedom."

"He was very good to my boy, I know that," said Mallinson simply.

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De Châtillon's face was a study in conflicting feelings: he was mindful of certain words that Yarrowborough had once let fall, and which he had never known whether or no to believe. "Eh bien! we have all good reasons, and George has the best," he said. "Why then do we not act? Carteret, you shall write to him, is it not so?"

"I have written."

"An'—no answer?"

Carteret shook his head.

"So: that is bad. Well, will you hear what I say?"

"Friend, I came to ask thy advice; and, what is more, to take it."

"Then go thou, and see him. Pst! I have spoken."

"What would be the good of that?" objected Carteret.

"All: nossing. See you, if he will come it is all right: if not, it is all done. People will not wait for him forever. She will throw him away, an' he will try an' come back, and he will find there is no room now: then he will take his pistol, an'—plop! there is no more Christian Yarrowborough. Therefore I say, go, and instantly."

"I believe thee's right," said Carteret, stopping. "Why didn't we think of it before? Thanks, De Châtillon. I knew thee'd help us. It's the only thing to do."

"You go now?"

"Yes: every hour is important, and why should I waste time?"

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"What a devil of a tête-à-tête you will have!" said De Châtillon, in a tone of somewhat grim appreciation. "Iarbrou is not quite like a lost lamb."

"I'm awfully glad," said Mallinson. "You'll do it all right, I'm sure. And if you point out to him that it's his duty, I feel certain he'll come."

"Bless thy simple faith, George, it does me good to hear thee," chuckled Carteret. "Remember me in thy orisons to-night, De Châtillon. Thee's a heretic Romanist, so thee need have no scruples about praying for the dead."

He was turning to go, when both Mallinson and De Châtillon, moved by the same impulse, uttered the same hurried question: "When shall we hear?" Carteret looked back at them with a peculiar grimace, which signified many things.

"Perhaps, if you're so anxious, I'd better let you both have a wire to-night," he said. "I'll send off a couple of telegrams from Moor End station: 'Yes,' if I win: 'No,' if he won't come. Ta, ta!"

Carteret's was not the nature to understand the fascination which Moor End and Margaret Carew had for Yarborough. As his train flashed its eager way through solemn plains, between ripening cornfields and the golden gloom of woods, he sat curled in a corner of a smoking - carriage with his umbrella across his knees, wondering how any man could be such a fool as to prefer the blank face of the country to London's sun-coloured streets and perpetual radiance of excitement. Love was to him little more than a captivation of the senses, much to be depre-

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cated when it got in the way of business. He was a romantic lover of great cities, and knew of nothing in the world worth living for except the rewards they have to give. He had felt joy and pain, and felt them intensely, in years past, but always within a narrow range of perception: unlike Yarborough, whose versatile temperament responded to every voice of passion in the world. What seemed to Carteret a mere obsession, was to Yarborough an idyl: he never forgot those summer days at Moor End, when love and youth and glorious ambition crowned him with their luminous diadem.

It was evening when Carteret got to Moor End, and he was told that Yarborough was in the garden. He went to look for him, not without misgivings, prepared to be consigned to Hades for his impertinence: not at all prepared to find Yarborough lying under a deodar on the lawn, reading Keats. So absorbed was the student that he saw and heard nothing, till Carteret poked at him with the inevitable umbrella. Then he looked up, and Carteret stared at him, for the arid cynicism of the politician had vanished: long nights of sleep and days of restful sunshine had already given him youth, freshness, and a pale Italian bloom of colouring. That first glance struck the key-note of the scene that followed. Duty and ambition stood opposed to love and hedonism, an old quarrel: but Yarborough's house was divided against itself: the nobler strength of his nature revolted against pleasure's alien yoke in strong yearning for the grip of its old, ruthless, God-given master.

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Carteret struck to the heart of the question, scorning diplomacy. "Yarborough, lad, forgive me for speaking," he said, "but I must speak, whether thee will or no. I'm old, and thee's nothing but a boy, after all."

"Go on."

"What are you staying down here for?"

"Health," said Yarborough. He got up and leaned against the red trunk of the cedar with his hands in his pockets: he always said of himself that he preferred to lie standing. "Surely you remember how I got knocked about at Poplar?"

"Oh, it's sick, is it? Well, it doesn't look it," scoffed Carteret. "Don't lie to me, lad; it's waste of time. Thee came to make love to a chit of a girl."

"Suppose I had," said Yarborough, his silken voice suddenly taking an edge of brutal meaning. "I dare say I should neither drink nor beat my wife."

"No. . . . What a cad you are! Hit as hard as you like, I sha'n't budge till I've said my say out. Do you know you're ruining yourself?"

"By taking a week's holiday? I should be flattered to believe it, but I think you exaggerate the importance of my position."

"By no means," Carteret assured him drily. "A man need not be a C. O. to ruin himself if he runs away on active service. Thee seems to forget that Randolph Wemyss's paid secretary has no business to go philandering off after any pretty face he takes a fancy to."

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“‘Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth,’” quoted Yarborough. “Do you ever read the Bible? It is worth reading.”

“It’s a question of common honesty.”

“It’s a question of common-sense. Need you object, if Mr. Wemyss doesn’t?”

“I’m too much thy friend to hold my tongue.”

“Oh, the candid friend—!” Yarborough shrugged his shoulders with an air of boredom. “Really, Carteret, that rôle is played out.”

Carteret stepped forward suddenly and laid his white babyish hand on Yarborough’s arm. “Christian, don’t get thyself caught by a woman. Don’t!” he pleaded. “Take it from a man twice thy age, that’s known as many women as dead men. She mayn’t mean to do any harm—I believe she’s good enough, as girls go—but she’ll drag thee down from thyself, play Lucilia to thy Lucretius, break thy purposes, force thee to hire out thy soul to pay her milliner’s bills.”

“Are you giving me the fruit of your own observation of women? You have certainly had some varied experiences.”

Again Carteret started, and winced under the cutting words: but he was not to be turned aside. “Do you think she’ll have you?” he asked.

“I think you are becoming a trifle coarse: however, in strict confidence, I’ll own to you that I think she will.”

“O Lord!” said Carteret, and suddenly began to laugh. “O Christian, lad, I don’t think she will.

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Women don't like to be taken for granted: she'll never tolerate that insufferable self-conceit of thine."

"Do you think not?" was Yarborough's low-toned answer: then, in a sudden fiery casting-aside of reticence (which was to him no fortress of silent council, as to Savile, but rather a mask, put on out of regard for other men's timorousness), he went on: "You—you are in the right to preach to me of the love that debases, you who worshipped at the hundred shrines of the Paphian Venus. What do *you* know about love? The wife you killed knew more of it than you do. My love for Margaret is as pure as that of a priest for the Virgin: purer: it gets no fortification from tinsel crowns and humbugging miracles. I love her for what she is, flesh and blood for flesh and blood, spirit for spirit. Keep your Franco-Latin amours: give me the old Saxon word, fresh from the earth, earth-clean, sun-pure. Margaret drag me down? Margaret will make me greater than I ever could be without her. She'd make me good as well, if it were within the power of mortal to do it: but I own I fear that's beyond her."

"And Edmund?"

"To the devil with Edmund! Margaret will never know."

This last piece of racy wickedness was more than even Carteret had expected: after it he felt he might as well quit the field. But his blood was up: he had suffered under Yarborough's rough and unscrupulous handling of his terrible history: he was not minded that Yarborough should go scathless.

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"Thee thinks thy master's too much of an old fool to send thee packing, whatever tricks thee may play upon him: but take care not to reckon without thy host, lad."

"Mr. Weymss has not recalled me," said Yarborough haughtily.

Carteret grinned. "Not he! He daren't. But how if thee found no place to come back to?"

"What, he's not dying?"

"I like thy grief, lad, it's so genuine. No, he's not sick, so far as I know, except from pining for his precious secretary: but he's sick of public life. This morning De Châtillon told me he has definitely applied for the Chiltern Hundreds."

Carteret was deeply fond of this lad, with an affection which was not to be shaken by the interchange of small amenities, but he enjoyed the utterance of those words, and their staggering effect upon Yarborough. "Do you mean that he is going to get out of Parliament?" he cried incredulously.

Carteret nodded. "His asthma is worse again," he said with a significant grimace.

"What's that?"

"In plain English, he's afraid of the responsibility, now that he hasn't got Lucifer at his elbow to prompt him."

"Have you any guess at the man who will take his place?"

"Mallinson has already declined the honour, and Hammersley could never patch up a cabinet. Probably they will return to Maurice Fremantle."

"Lord Fremantle? Six months in office—I give

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him a year, at the outside: then some villainous foreign entanglement, and a crash: no Liberal programme: no leader: our side split into a dozen factions, at odds with each other and with him: the Saviles in good discipline, fighting like death to utilise every split— There, there!”

“Exactly,” agreed Carteret, “and then Hayes will get a fresh lease of power, and that will clap a nice little extinguisher over maiden ambitions—eh? Not much chance for a free-lance with Jocelyn Hayes in office!”

“It’s the work of years undone. In six months we shall be back where we were before. Fremantle, of all men! as if their last experience of him were not enough.”

“It’s all thy own fault. I always told thee how it would be, if Weymss was left for long to his own devices.”

“As for me, I’m ruined. It may be a dozen years before I get such another chance—I, an outsider, without interest, and not over-much beloved by Fremantle and his crew. And who can tell what may happen between this and then? Power I must get, I must have it: and at once: good Lord, to think of Fremantle meddling in the East!” Yarrowborough caught Carteret’s hand, and held it locked between his narrow fingers: the pale virile face showed the lover transformed into the statesman and preoccupied by intense and restless thoughts. “When did you say was the next train up?”

“Let me look at my watch, will thee? Well—it goes in forty minutes.”

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"Go in and explain — tell them Wemyss has wired to me. Or, no: you don't tell lies, I forgot. Say what you will, but get me excused. Tell the man to pack my things and send them after me."

Carteret's face was a study in emotions hard to classify. "I like thy use of the imperative," he exclaimed. "And what about Margaret?"

"She will suffer, but it can't be helped. Tell her things have gone wrong in town: she knows that I could never endure to stand by and see things undone that want doing. It is Margaret for understanding: she'll not be jealous, she will only be sorry. Tell her I'll come back again, and with fresher, finer laurels to lay at her feet."

Under the ambiguous and delicate circumstances of Yarborough's position with regard to Margaret, this was a message which Carteret entirely lacked courage to deliver. He had no desire to face Margaret's wrath, still less her ridicule, and he would have said as much, but he had not time. With his last word Yarborough broke away from him, threaded the fir plantation, and vaulted the fence on to the downs. Carteret followed, and from the outskirts of Althea's garden watched him cross the wind and sun beaten heights of thymy turf, his step rapid and springing, his head thrown back in the face of the sunlight: a creature marvellously alive, his lips moving in dumb recitation of thoughts and schemes which were by-and-by to be built into the fabric of empire. Resentment faded from Carteret's mind as he watched him: and pride and tri-

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umph alone spoke in the telegrams which a few hours later he despatched to Mallinson and to De Châtillon:

"MOOR END, 8.10 P.M.

"Ecce Christian, exit Fremantle.

"CARTERET."

XI

NOON: IN THE JEWEL-SHOP

A WEEK later, under a wonderful August sky, Yarborough stepped for the last time across the threshold of his master's house, and stood on the pavement a free man. It was no more than a week since his return, but it seemed like a year, so much had come and gone in the interval. Political affairs had gained the height of a crisis: no one knew what was going to happen, not even Yarborough himself, despite his intricate knowledge of the working of men and events. He had done his best with Mr. Wemyss, but the invalid was obstinate, and clung to the prospect of a peaceful winter at Nice: he even ventured, with the privileged audacity of a sick man, to come to a quarrel with his secretary, whose services were no longer necessary, and send him about his business. Yarborough was thankful for this timely release, and expressed his gratitude in terms which annoyed Mr. Wemyss and horrified the doctor and nurse: but they parted friends, for Wemyss, like every man who came much into contact with Yarborough, was so far fascinated by his indubitable genius as to admire him and wish him good luck.

Across the intense golden blue of the sky sailed

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a throng of heavy rain-clouds, gray as iron, breaking into patches of smoky silver where the light flashed between them like sword-blades: wind and gold and rainy blue made up a symbol of Yarborough's life, which was breaking now to broader issues. Everything was uncertain: Wemyss was out of the running, and rumour said that Fremantle, the least practical of men, had suddenly developed theories upon one or two important questions which would make it impossible for him to get or keep a Cabinet together. Yarborough's own position was unparalleled: he was in everybody's confidence, except Hayes's, who had no confidants, and was in a fair way to become titular as well as virtual leader in the Lower House. Meanwhile Hayes made no sign, the autumn session drew on apace: bets ran high: Yarborough's name was freely spoken, and most seriously by those who knew most. No one knew what a day might bring forth. In all this, Margaret was no more forgotten than the sun behind a cloud, whose presence gives light, though his image is invisible. Yarborough, working twenty hours out of the twenty-four, was driven on, animated, inspired by the hope of laying such glorious laurels at her feet as might be worthy even of Margaret's acceptance.

Driving rapidly eastward in a hansom through the rich Belgravian squares, Yarborough utilised his leisure by making notes of a speech shortly to be delivered before the Liberal League. It was an axiom of his never to waste moments, and besides he liked to show himself to the public in statesman-

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like vignettes: no ruse was too petty for Yarborough's wit. He got out at the Piccadilly end of Bond Street, and walked up it, meeting acquaintances at every step, and here his manner changed, for among the idle rich his cue was to play the man of the world, who keeps great affairs in the background: and admirably he played it.

"Hallo, Yarborough! whither away?"

"To Brook Street, on business, if you know what that is."

"Too bad, upon my word! I'm dying of heat, and I can't get my lord to budge till Hayes does something. I tell you what it is, if you Parliamentary chaps don't settle your affairs before the twelfth there'll be a revolution."

"Headed by the Honourable Lorraine Lempriere? That will be formidable indeed!"

"I say, why weren't you at the Carews' dance last night?" asked the exquisite, languidly flicking a grain of dust from Yarborough's sleeve. "I looked for you."

"Are they back in town? I did not know it."

"Carew was recalled—man that can't be spared, don't you know? The great Savile was there, dancing with his fiancée. I think her pretty, don't you?"

"Mainwaring Savile engaged? By Jove, I hadn't heard it. Who is she?"

"Mrs. Carew's cousin, the girl with the eyes. I like her: she's not a bit like a London girl, but she dresses à merveille, and puts on her clothes like a Frenchwoman.—Hold on to me a moment, and don't try to talk, or you'll make a scene."

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It was only for a few seconds that the earth rocked and the heavens spun round Yarborough: he woke to find Lempriere, a diplomat by trade, holding him steady with a hand on his arm, and talking exceedingly fast to cover deficiencies.

"Thanks very much: I am a fool. You'll not give me away?"

Lempriere bowed. "Rely on me," he said, with a glance which asked no questions and drew no inferences.

"And, by-the-by, don't spread that report: I fancy it will have to be contradicted."

"Very well. If you're going on to Brook Street you'll meet Savile, I expect, for I saw him in at Manton's as I passed. But if I were you I should go home: a touch of the sun is not to be trifled with, and it's fearfully hot this morning."

"Many thanks, but set your mind at rest; we sha'n't quarrel. Good-bye."

"Au revoir," said Lempriere, ceremoniously lifting his extravagant Panama. He watched with admiration Yarborough's dexterous navigation of the crowded pavement. "There goes a man hard hit, for all he carries it off so well," so ran his unuttered reflection, and his thin, fair face wore a troubled look as he sauntered down to his club.

Yarborough knew Manton's well enough: he was an amateur of precious stones, and loved the great jewel-shop, with its sequence of chambers darkened by narrow windows and heavy eaves. He liked to stroll for half an hour through the hot rooms, dark as a November evening, with his own hand setting

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electric stars to flash over tall cabinets and crystal tables, as the whim took him. All good customers were free to do this, and Yarborough was a good customer in Manton's eyes, for he knew and loved the life of stones. Here were diamonds, worth a king's ransom, rivers of white light flashing with multitudinous fires: wine-tinted almandines, fire-rubies, garnets from the Russian mines like drops of blood set on fire: turquoises smuggled from the treasuries of Teheran, and blue as the Reuss under its bridges: topaz, and opal, unluckiest of fair stones: sapphires rivalling the First Edward's, got from the Capelau Mountains: sunset-green of emeralds, and virginal moonlight of pearls, wrought into enamelled settings, or upon a hoar-frost of gold.

Yarborough found Savile alone in the farthest room, bending over a tray of loose rings, interlaced, emitting sparks, and seeming to twist and writhe like a nest of vipers as the light of an electric corona pulsed and flickered over them. Hearing a step, he looked round, and slightly bowed, but did not speak: he was not one of those men who rush into words when they find themselves awkwardly placed.

"The workmanship of those rings is very fine," said Yarborough. His voice sounded so strange and abrupt in his own ears that he thought Savile would stare at him: but Savile stood motionless and quiet, examining the jewels without handling them. "Manton is a great man: he understands the life of stones, which to most jewellers represent only a means of making money."

"It is fine work," Savile agreed, indifferently.

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"I'm a bit of an amateur myself, and so he gives me the trade discount, and the run of the place: but they say he refused half a million of dollars for a necklace of mediocre sapphires, sooner than let it fall into the hands of a Chicago pork-butcher."

"He's an eccentric."

"It was only a rumour, of course. I don't pin much faith to rumours in London. I heard one to-day which I am anxious to get contradicted."

"I never listen to rumours."

"This plique-à-jour enamel-work, how fine!" Yarborough lifted a fairy-like bracelet, and held it to the light. "It's like a pattern of tiny beetles' wings caught in a gold cobweb.—Well, aren't you curious?"

"Not I."

"Do you let London take your name in vain?"

"Excuse me one moment," said Savile, going quickly forward to intercept Manton, who was coming from the inner shop with a casket in his hand. But he was too late to hide from Yarborough the nature of the casket, the crest and initials of Lord Ferdinand Savile on the lid, or the blaze of family diamonds displayed when Manton threw it open.

"I have recut as well as reset the centre stones of the necklace," he heard the great jeweller say. "You've gained in brilliancy more than you've lost in carats, Mr. Savile, and I'm sure your lady, if she's a woman of taste, would never grudge to have the pretty things pruned for their own good."

Savile went into the next room with Manton and spoke to him for a few minutes: then he came back

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to Yarborough and the tray of rings, and took up the conversation where he had dropped it. "London is generally taking some name in vain: to-day mine, to-morrow it may be yours."

"Are you going to be married, that you have your heirlooms tinkered up?" demanded Yarborough.

"You heard Manton say they were badly cut."

"And you take no interest in rumours? Admirable indifference! but the lady—you don't think of her."

"The lady! what lady?" asked Savile, turning sharp round on Yarborough.

"The lady with whose name yours is linked by rumour."

"What is the rumour?"

"That you are engaged."

"To—?"

"Miss Margaret Carew."

"I thought you said you wished to contradict it?"

"I always wish to contradict what is not true."

Savile shrugged his shoulders. "Please yourself," he said.

"Aren't you going to answer me?"

"Have you asked me any question?"

"Do you mean to give out that you are engaged to Margaret Carew?"

"It is not I that have given it out: I never discuss my private affairs."

Yarborough did most heartily wish himself back in the days of the duel: he felt that he had received ample provocation. "You refuse to give me any answer?" he asked.

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"In what capacity do you inquire?"

"Miss Carew has done me the honour to call me her friend."

"I don't recognise your claim," said Savile. He took a ring from the tray, a marquise hoop of glorious diamonds, every stone flashing like a dew-drop, and stood turning it this way and that as he spoke, apparently giving more of his attention to the jewels than to Yarborough. "The fact is, you haven't any. I never quarrel with men of your stamp, but still less do I allow them to cross-examine me on my private affairs."

"You typical Englishman, why don't you mend your manners? I dislike you twice as well as you dislike me, but I don't let my inclinations get the better of my courtesy. Miss Carew is an unprotected girl. I hear her name dragged into a report which I know to be false, and ask you to contradict it. What unjustifiable claim do I make there?"

"If you know it to be false, contradict it yourself."

"It is false."

Savile stood looking down at him, indolently ironical, incuriously keen. "You are damnably afraid it's true," he remarked.

"You refuse to contradict it?"

"I haven't heard it yet—except from you."

"You will compel me to act in a way which you will probably find disagreeable," said Yarborough, white with rage, and showing his worst qualities, as he generally did in Savile's society. "I shall not stand by and see a lady's name dragged into pub-

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licity: I shall put the whole case before Miss Carew. Of course I shall not speak of your present extraordinary conduct unless I am forced to do so."

"Don't think you'll gain much by that move, if you do."

"I have no wish to gain anything. I simply desire to get Miss Carew's leave to contradict a lie."

"I should imagine you'll only make a fool of yourself if you meddle."

"Are you engaged to her, then?"

"I thought you were sure I was not."

"She loves *me*, not you."

Yarborough's voice rang like a harp-string, and Savile glanced apprehensively over his shoulder. "Take care, you'll be heard," he exclaimed. "And keep your wits about you, man: you'll be sorry for this to-morrow."

"No one is within earshot, and I like candour," said Yarborough with his grim laugh. He was not in the habit of repenting of his indiscretions, from which a saving element of calculation was rarely absent. All must be fair and open between him and Savile, since, if it came to stabs in the dark, Savile held a more potent weapon than any in Yarborough's armoury. "She is mine. She may have given herself to you out of pique, not understanding how I was forced to leave her: but she is mine by a spiritual pre-contract. She and I are kith and kin, predestined to love and marry. As to you, you've nothing in common with her, and I shall hold myself justified in getting her to break her engagement."

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"You're making a fool of yourself now, you know."

"I shall go to Margaret to-day."

"Do," said Savile absently. He replaced the lid on the tray, and picked up his gloves and cane. The interview was over, and the honours of it lay with Savile, who had contrived to be intolerably rude without losing his temper, and to foil Yarbrough's questions without once pronouncing Margaret's name. Yarbrough followed him to the centre of the shop, blind for once to the play of fire about him: nothing short of Savile's suddenly dropping dead would have satisfied his wrath. He noticed that Savile paid for the ring and took it away with him: the price he did not hear, but from the splendour of the brilliants and the delicacy of their antique silver setting he judged it to be extravagant. They passed together from the hush and dimness of the shop into the roar and glitter of Bond Street under fiery sunshine: and parted on the pavement to go different ways, and meet again later in the day.

XII

AFTERNOON : LOVE LIKE A FIRE

MARGARET'S private room was big and bare, quaint and brown, and had a north light; and Margaret herself, in a brown holland overall, stood before a tall white ashwood easel in the broad window, putting the last touches to a study in oils. Wooded hill-tops bronzed by sunset rose out of the cold blue shadows of a valley into the warm blue of an autumn sky flecked with orange clouds: in the foreground stood the inevitable gabled cottage, but Margaret had shown her originality by rejecting the almost equally inevitable little girl in a sunbonnet leaning over a rustic gate. She eyed her handiwork dubiously: she knew that it was very bad, but did not know enough to set it right. A fancy crossed her mind that the picture might be taken as typical of her life in its incompleteness. Margaret was tired of eating and drinking, doing up her hair in curlers, changing her dress every three hours, and hearing herself described by Althea's lady visitors as a sweet amiable girl: she could not help wishing that something would happen, even if it were something disagreeable. Pat to the moment of her thought, came the voice of Thompson the second footman, loftily unconscious of the sovereign he had

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just pocketed, suavely announcing: "Mr. Christian Yarborough."

Margaret's face lit up. "Oh, it's you," she said holding out her hand. "I'm so glad. But how stupid of Thompson to show you into this untidy room. Never mind, you shall come and tell me what to do about my picture if you like. You are a critic, aren't you? I know you know everything."

Yarborough thrust his hands into his pockets and stood before the easel, surveying Margaret's handiwork with a caustic glance. "Ah! impressionist, I see," he remarked. "Strikingly harmonious colour-scheme, handled in a broad and convincing style, Miss Carew: the light is admirably stage-managed and the contrasts are subtly rendered."

"Oh, not any more, please," said Margaret. "I looked for something better from you. Let's settle that it's a symphony in C minor, with a flute obbligato in the middle distance and a trombone passage in the chiaroscuro: and now will you kindly tell me why my walls are tumbling down?"

"If you really wish me to tell you, I should imagine that it's because you have never learned to paint."

This was rude enough to satisfy even Margaret's craving for candour, and she gasped under it, but bore up heroically. "Thank you," she said. "I'd a kind of idea that that might have something to do with it: but let me know the worst at once. Is it young-lady-like?"

"Eminently," said Yarborough. "Why don't you learn perspective before you try to paint? And yet

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you have artist's blood in you: there is colour and wind on that bit of dirty canvas. You've a marvellous capacity for living: how is it that you are satisfied with your trumpery existence?"

"Dear me, I wanted things to happen and now they're happening!" thought Margaret. There was exhilaration in the prospect. "So like a man!" she said derisively. "What do you know about my existence, and how can you possibly tell whether I'm satisfied with it?"

"Am I to understand that you aren't satisfied? Are you ambitious?"

This was a question which Margaret did not choose to answer, except by a little Frenchified shrug. Yarborough laughed.

"If a man were to offer you place, power, prestige, a hand in the great political game, what would you say?"

"I should say 'No, thank you,' and drop him a pretty curtsy."

"But if he came and told you that he loved you into the bargain? If he came to you all sin-stained and worn with the world's work, and offered you the love that's like a fire, to purify and hallow his life and your own: the indestructible kind, not the kind that wears out on the honeymoon, but the kind that's eaten its way into the very foundations of his nature: if he came and said, 'Take me, that in a few days, or years, will be at the head of the British Empire, and make me into what you like: make me into a plaster saint if you like: govern me, and Europe through me—' Well! What then, Margaret?"

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"Why then I should know he was talking nonsense, to be sure!" said Margaret.

Again Yarborough uttered his grim little laugh. "Well, I say all that," he said coolly. "And I never talk nonsense, Margaret."

Margaret put up her chin with a little mocking movement. "I *should* like to see you turn into a plaster saint," she said. "As if everybody didn't know that the one and only way to keep you from doing what you want to do is to tell you to do it!"

"Oh yes, with men," Yarborough agreed unabashed, "but not with you. I tell you I love you, Margaret: no heroine of a penny novelette was ever loved more sentimentally. I love the prismatic colours that the sun makes in that brown hair of yours: I love the way you crook your little finger out when you pick up your teacup: I love all your pretty untidy ways, the pins and needles that you will stick into the lapel of your coat, the extraordinary knack you have of getting your hat crooked, the lift of your feet when you walk, and the queer way you put your shoulders when you're talking to people who bore you. I believe no man was ever more idiotically in love than I am, and yet—and yet you could lift me up to God."

"All that would be very interesting, if I loved you: but the question is, Do I?"

"That is not the question in the least. You were in love with me when I left you at Moor End."

"Was I?" Margaret asked, in a reflective tone. "You may be right: I really don't know. Is fascination the same as love, do you think?"

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"My dear girl, you as good as confessed it that first morning on the lawn. Those eyes of yours betray you."

"I don't think it's nice of you to be so positive: and, anyway, why did you go away if you were so sure?"

"Ah! so you were jealous, were you?" Yarborough made a step toward her, but Margaret backed against the table and put out her hands to keep him off. "I had to go: I can't explain why — women never understand politics. I went" — again that haunting phrase recurred—"to win laurels worthy to be laid at your feet. I wanted to be King of England, that I might make you Queen."

"But the Guelphs are quite safe really, aren't they?" Margaret said, lifting her eyebrows. "I shouldn't like—"

"Esprit malin, va! How you suit me, Margaret! When we're married we'll confound the Christians by giving them a practical illustration of their own doctrine of the sacrament of marriage."

"Will we? I wouldn't: I'd rather live my life to God and myself than to the world."

"When I win a victory, I like the world to know it," Yarborough admitted. "I like the flags and the triumphal arches. I like to get the mob down at my feet: it's what they're fitted for. Nine-tenths of the world were created to admire the other tenth, and they're only happy when they're doing it. That's why we talk of the curse of civilization, which makes men equal."

"And which tenth of the world do *you* admire,

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pray?" flashed out Margaret shrewdly. "Oh, arrogant!"

"Myself, and—you. You first, self next as your lover, and the world infinitely last."

"What's so odd about you, is that you parade your vices as if they were virtues."

"Love for you is the only virtue I pretend to."

Margaret pushed back her hair with nervous fingers: she felt nothing but embarrassment under Yarborough's ardent and masterful glance. Nor did she feel less shy when she caught sight of her own reflection in the mirror, looking like a tall slip of a school-girl in her loose pinafore besmeared with paint. "But I haven't given you any answer," she said rebelliously. "I haven't said yes."

"Your eyes said it for you, that first evening when we met in the Strand."

"My eyes say a great deal, according to you: I'm quite sure they never said anything of the kind."

"I like you ten times better for the salt of contradiction in you: I like you to provoke and defy me, and keep me at arm's-length. I should despise a woman who was afraid of me."

Margaret gave a little mutinous glance. "You never will despise me on that score," she said.

"On the contrary, it is you who make a fool of me, who make me commit a thousand imbecilities, and give myself away like a boy of twenty. Do you imagine I care for that? Laugh as much as you like, and call me a fool and an egotist: I take my revenge, my dear girl—so."

He stepped forward, and took her in his arms.

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Margaret uttered a sharp exclamation: she could hear his heart beat, strong and even, under her cheek. He bent over her and kissed her again and again. Under those kisses, Margaret's uncertainty vanished like a dream. She woke suddenly to a full knowledge of her own nature, and found herself at last endued with the mature strength of womanhood, with novel powers and capacities and affinities, long latent and unsuspected, yet innate. Unable to free herself, she waited the more patiently because she had no longer the slightest fear or doubt. As for Yarborough, he was in heaven. In tenacity a Saxon, in fire a Celt, in life ascetically pure, he was precisely of the right age to love and marry. He had gained the experience of middle age without satiety, and had outlived the unreasonable illusions of youth while retaining its freshness. He bent over her, looking down into her eyes, his face so wrought by pure and tender passion that even to Margaret its expression was a revelation. "This—this is worth living for," he said, his rich voice a caress: and then, with a bitterness of regret which made Margaret's heart ache, "O Margaret, how barren the world is, after all!"

Margaret struggled against a sudden inclination to sob. "Oh, I'm so sorry—I'm so sorry!" was all she could say.

"Sorry for Savile, do you mean? Ah, well, you shall teach me to be generous."

"No: sorry for you."

"You're a true woman. Why should you pity a man who does not envy the angels their felicity?"

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"Let me go, please," said Margaret gravely. She stepped back and leaned against the wall, one arm thrown out along the frame of her easel, her left hand fidgeting with her apron, her pretty ankles crossed. Something in her attitude and in the clear directness of her eyes seemed to set her suddenly a long way off from Yarborough. "Mr. Yarborough, will you believe," she said slowly, "that I do not care for you at all?"

Yarborough was dumb.

"I do like you as a friend, and I was silly enough to let you dazzle me with all that nonsense about kings and queens. But I have not one particle of love for you, and never shall."

"But you let me kiss you?"

"I didn't want you to, only you would do it. I didn't like it at all." Margaret's colour came: she put up her hand to brush away the physical memory of contact. "I disliked it very much," she repeated.

"God! you can't mean it," said Yarborough. "You, the only woman I ever loved, my second self, the incarnation of my hope of heaven—"

"Please, please, don't, you hurt so!"

"You don't mind sending the man who loves you to the devil?"

"I would not submit to your love-making—no, not if it were to save your soul!"

The light, the fire, the power, the passion, the pleading faded out of Yarborough's face: he put his hands in his pockets and turned on his heel with a laugh, profoundly ironical, impartially appreciative of the satiric aspect of his destiny.

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"The Lord have mercy upon fools!" he said, over his shoulder. "I hope you are a good raconteuse, Miss Carew: this story might be made amusing."

"I think it is awfully sad," said Margaret, earnestly. "Mr. Yarborough, please don't think that we—that I—"

"That you and Mrs. Carew will laugh over it together? I give you free leave. Don't spare me: I deserve ample castigation."

Margaret glanced at him reflectively. "Well, you *have* made rather a fool of yourself," she owned. "If it was anybody else I'd try to be tactful, but you always see through any humbug. And yet, do you know, I don't feel the least inclination to laugh at you. I'd really rather cry."

"For Heaven's sake, don't pity me. I have always considered sympathy a peculiarly ill-bred form of officiousness."

Margaret laughed drearily. "Ah, you're beginning to find out what a fraud I am," she said. "I'm really only the clothes-peg you hung your ideals on. I never can get my emotions straight—never love the people I ought to love. In fact, I never knew anything about love, I believe, till—till just now."

"Ah! and it was I who taught you?"

"Indirectly, yes: because I felt you—you hadn't any business to be doing it."

"Doing what? Kissing you? Miss Carew, who is the man you would have liked to have kissing you?"

"Nobody: and if there were I wouldn't tell you"

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Margaret answered indignantly, but her colour rose high.

Yarborough laughed ironically. "Don't play the school-girl, you can't do it: there is too full a tide of life beating in your veins for that. You know well enough what love means."

"I never had a proposal before in my life. There!"

"That does not prove that you will never have another. How about Mainwaring Savile?"

If it had been to save her life, Margaret could not have met his eyes, nor saved herself from blushing. "I think you are behaving hatefully," she said in a shaken voice.

"It can't be Savile? You don't mean that? You don't mean that you're in love with Mainwaring Savile?"

"I never said so!" cried out Margaret: and then, womanlike, cast away her armour and buried her face in her hands. Yarborough shrugged his shoulders.

"This grows more and more amusing," he remarked. "I swore to Savile this morning that you were in love with me."

"He wouldn't believe you!" came in muffled tones from Margaret.

"As a matter of fact, he didn't. You need be under no apprehension on that score. Well, I should think no man ever made more of a fool of himself than I have!"

"Never, I should think. How dared you say such a thing to Mr. Savile about me? If I ever had cared for you, I would have ceased to care for you after that!"

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"If you had ever cared for me, you would not care what I did."

"You are quite wrong. I love people for what they are, not for what they look like. If I love Mainwaring Savile—and I do love him, I'll not deny it—it is because he is a man whom I can trust: he is just, noble, and pure. *He* is no time-serving politician; he does not write puffs of himself and truckle to newspaper-men to get them inserted."

"The taunt is untrue as well as unworthy. No newspaper, however venal and degraded, could be purchased by truckling: I've paid for all my puffs in honest coin of the realm."

"Honest?" repeated Margaret, unable to help laughing. "Please don't be satirical, Mr. Yarborough."

"So Mainwaring Savile is honest and I am not—is that it? Certainly love carries an enchanter's wand."

"At all events," Margaret retorted swiftly, "Mr. Savile tells no lies."

"And steals no treaties—eh?"

"What do you mean by that? Explain, please."

Yarborough had not meant anything except a bitter sneer at himself, but he was too much infuriated to say so. "Ask him," he said. "Let him explain, if he can."

"Do you mean to pretend to tell me that Mr. Savile has done anything underhand?"

"Is it absolutely inconceivable that Mr. Savile should do anything underhand? Happy Mr. Savile!"

"You seem to forget that I've just told you I love

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him, or perhaps that word does not convey the same meaning to you that it does to me. If I were taken up for picking pockets, would you deplore my fall from grace?"

"Not at all: I should merely deplore the prospect of your being sent to gaol."

"I don't think love is love unless it's built on confidence, and that's one reason why I could never care for you."

"All right: you ask Savile about the theft of the German treaty, and see if he can answer you!" said Yarborough, now really reckless of results, and vividly aware that Savile had said he would never put forward a statement of which he had no proof. "You'll not get a word out of him except a flat denial; that, of course, is easy to give."

"And you haven't given me anything except a shabby insinuation," Margaret pointed out, and so far lost her temper as to add with heat and acrimony, "And anyway I'd rather have Mr. Savile's word than your oath."

After that a silence fell, during which Margaret experienced certain faint prickings of dismay. She was still too excited to regret her audacity, but it did occur to her to wonder whether she had not uttered a few things in her wrath which would witness against her in the night watches, and cause her to repent in sackcloth and ashes. Presently Yarborough turned to her with a look in his face which was like a hand on Margaret's heart.

"Why should I wait? I only trouble you. Dear, I could have loved you well if you would have had

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me: but that was not to be, and I am glad of it. Your husband must be no self-seeking politician, but an honourable man, a title which has never been claimed for me. I'm neither an Arthur nor a Lancelot, but a new variety of guinea-pig, a kind of jobbing premier in the bud. Think a little kindly of me though, Margaret: I could have been your true lover."

"You could be anything you chose," said Margaret, caught and fascinated again by the inconsistency of his temperament. "And how I wish you would choose, and choose nobly!"

"My choice was made when I was a boy. I meant to tell you all that, but it seems you prefer to listen to narratives of Mainwaring Savile's school-days. Well—! I must go. Good-bye."

Margaret insisted upon shaking hands, somewhat against Yarborough's will: but he did not tell her, and she, quick as she was, did not guess, that he shrank from the touch of her cool fingers. She followed him to the door with her eyes, perplexed, no longer angry, painfully regretting a few of her own speeches: and perhaps it was the finest compliment she could have paid to Yarborough that among the utterances she would have liked to cancel she did not include her confession of love for Savile. He might be a scoundrel, but he was also a man to whom a woman could speak truth without fear of misinterpretation.

XIII

SUNSET: LOVE LIKE A HAVEN

MARGARET got up and went slowly into the drawing-room; it was empty, and for the first time in her life she was grateful to Althea for an exhibition of tact. It was indeed a laudable action that Althea, who was the very soul of curiosity, and must have heard of Yarborough's presence, should have gone out without summoning or even waiting for Margaret. The room looked to the west, and the sun, which neared its setting, filled its brown shadows with a flood of golden light. Margaret sat down on a sofa and leaned her head on her hand, staring into the heart of the glory. She had been strongly moved, and could not settle down again into the old quiet channels while Yarborough's looks and phrases, odd in flavour and not always easy to interpret, were still repeating themselves in her memory. She would have liked to consider and judge, but was borne away by the ebb and flow of keen preoccupation. She sat with shining eyes, her lips moving in imaginary question and answer: once or twice she laughed aloud: her calm face, with the little pointed chin and the hazel eyes, was visited by quick thoughts, as a lake by flaws of wind. Gradually, however, the influence of the evening stole upon her, an influence holy and calm, though

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its splendour was tarnished by London smoke; already the scene with Yarborough began to fade out of her thoughts, except as a matter for regret and atoning kindness: her own life, which is after all in a way the most precious thing in the world to each of us, came before her in all its unknown dimness. Holy, calm, and unfathomable, like the evening-lighted sky, she saw her destiny coming towards her: and like the blind man of old who sat by the wayside begging, she felt in herself that it was time for her to cast away the garment of fear, and go forward to meet it. Nothing could have seemed to her more natural than the announcement of Mainwaring Savile within an hour of Yarborough's going, and she turned towards him a face which had something of the evening's wonder in its clear expectant glance. Savile, on his part, had never looked more truly a son of earth and wind and sea. The room and all that was in it were dwarfed by contrast with his great height and stately frame. He had the tread of a Grecian wrestler, linked with the vivid freshness and exotic power of a man who has fought for his life with his bare hands in regions where the will of the strong is law. Margaret thought fit to go through a conventional greeting, but Savile, overlooking the chair she pushed forward, sat down on the window-seat and folded his arms, an attitude which was as habitual and characteristic in him as Yarborough's familiar gesture of thrusting his hands into his pockets. It was characteristic of him, also, that in his first words he went to the root of the question.

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"I thought perhaps I should find Yarborough here," he remarked without preface.

"Did you want to meet him? He has been gone some time."

"It's only fair to let you know I know what he came about."

Margaret was visibly taken aback. "Did he tell you?" she exclaimed. "Oh, I am sorry!"

"I can hold my tongue, you know, if you want me to," Savile answered in a low voice, after an appreciable pause.

"Surely you would do that without my asking you?"

"Surely, if you wished it; but do you?"

"Girls don't generally like these things talked about; at least, nice girls don't—at least, I don't myself," Margaret added, after a hurried mental review of her acquaintance. "And he wouldn't."

Savile bowed gravely. "Your will is my law. So what he told me is really true—correct, I mean?"

"That depends very much on what he said, Mr. Savile."

"Can I be as blunt as I like? I rather bar polite mystification; it's like working a helio in a mist."

Margaret nodded. "Say whatever you like," she said.

"Well, Yarborough said he was in love with you."

"One moment, please. Where did he tell you all this?"

"In at Manton's, in Bond Street. Nobody could

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have heard him. We were alone, right in the furthest room of all."

"Thank you, I see; go on."

"Well, he said he was going to marry you."

"Did he, indeed?" exclaimed Margaret, with some not unnatural resentment. Savile looked up quickly, and then away.

"What a fool I am!" he said. "I oughtn't to have put it like that. What he meant was that he had gathered from your manner that you liked him, and that he had a fair chance with you."

Margaret received this charitable version of Yarborough's conduct with a silent shrug, recognising in it less of Yarborough than of Savile, whose code of honour forbade him to be even just to a rival.

"Then he said he was coming off to tell you so."

"I hadn't any idea Mr. Yarborough had taken you for his confidant. However, as he has, I may as well tell you that he did."

"And you accepted him? I hope you'll be happy," Savile said with a great sigh. He went on quickly, before Margaret had time to break in: "But first you must listen to me."

Margaret always found it easy to remain quiet. "Well?" she said demurely.

"I'll not see you marry him in ignorance," Savile said, setting his teeth. "That man does love you, Miss Carew."

"I know it."

"And it's love worth having. One must give the—give him his due. I should think no man could love you better."

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"I don't know about that."

"He would stick to you if you were old and ugly; not that you ever could be ugly."

"I think I could, particularly if I got stout," said Margaret candidly; but Savile was not to be diverted.

"He probably will end up as premier. He has twice my brains."

"Only twice?"

Savile reddened. "Three times, if you like. There's nothing he can't do; any woman might be proud of him as a lover."

"Leave that part out," commanded Margaret, "and go on to the next."

"I must do it, I suppose," Savile said. He got up suddenly and turned his back on her, setting his face like a flint. "I know you'll despise me.—Never mind that, though. I've got to tell you a thing that's going to hurt you."

"Go on. I don't like suspense."

"He stole the German treaty from the Foreign Office and sent it to the papers."

It was so far from what Margaret had expected that she was for the moment bereft of speech. The silence seemed eternal to Savile, but he would not turn round; he was not going to spy on Margaret. At last she spoke, in a voice pregnant with meanings which he could not interpret for lack of a key.

"Are you sure of this?"

Savile's answer was to tell the story as briefly as possible. He believed in the mercifulness of a rapid stroke. Margaret drew a long breath when

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the recital was over: her instinct had believed him from the first, and reason was now convinced as well.

"Does he know you know?" she asked next.

"Yes, but I told him I should never tell."

"I see now," said Margaret quickly. "Oh, what a cunning trap!"

She was doing Yarborough an injustice, for he had spoken quite without premeditation: but she was not prepared to have Savile turn towards her with every mark of agitation in his face, and say:

"I beg of you not to take any sudden step. Think it over, and remember that he does care for you, after all."

"Do you want me to marry him?" Margaret asked, with the faintest possible emphasis on the former pronoun.

"Yes, if you love him."

"But if he is a thief—"

"A man may be any kind of skunk—scoundrel, I mean, and yet pull up and get straight again if he marries a good woman."

"You believe in reformed rakes, Mr. Savile?"

"Yarborough's not a rake. He says he never cared a cent for any woman but you, and I believe him. If you married him you could do what you liked with him."

"So he told me," said Margaret. "But if you want me to marry him, why did you tell me that story?"

"I'd got to let you have it clear before you. You're a woman with a head, and can judge for

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yourself; and after all, you've got to live your own life your own way, and I can't help you in it. No, I had to get things straight and let you take your own line: I dare say you think it was a pretty low-down trick, but I can't help that: I couldn't make out to hold my tongue and let you marry him blind-fold. The worst is, hurting you: I can't stand doing that."

Margaret leaned back in her chair and looked up at him smiling. "You're most absurdly chivalrous," she said. "Why are you so chivalrous?"

"I'm not: don't think it," Savile assured her grimly. "I'd like to kill Yarborough, sooner than see you marry him. I—I love you, Margaret."

"As if you hadn't been telling me that for the last ten minutes, Mainwaring."

"Did you say you'd marry Yarborough?"

"I don't like courtships by proxy, sir."

"You gave him his answer?"

"Do you think he is the sort of man to go away without it?"

Savile was very much moved, and he showed it, which was not often the case. "Margaret, don't play with me," he said. "God knows I'm in no temper to be played with."

"You will have to be in the temper to do what I like, not what you like," Margaret declared, and then, in a sudden fit of contrition, she added quickly, with her eyes lifted to the paling sky: "I do love you, Mainwaring. I will try and be a true wife to you."

Then she found herself lifted, held by a strength in comparison of which Yarborough's strength was

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that of a child: awe and reverence were in Savile's touch, as well as passion. Almost directly after she was released, but not till the spiritual stain of Yarborough's kiss had been atoned for by the touch of Savile's lips consummating a mystical union. This was the inception of a true marriage-bond, or so Margaret felt it: and Savile seemingly felt the same, though he said only:

"I'm not fit for this."

Instinct told Margaret that a return to the commonplace was desirable, and she effected it, though not without an inward rebellion. "That just shows you are," she said with a laugh. "If you said you were, I should know you couldn't be. Kneel down: you're tyrannically tall, and I can't reach you."

Savile knelt obediently, and Margaret put her hands on his shoulders, and held him away from her. To Yarborough the arch, laughing, beautiful face would have been an irresistible temptation; but Savile's less sensuous temperament forbade him even to ask for what Margaret was not perfectly ready to give. He was not one to brush the bloom from the flower of a woman's devotion by rough or eager handling, and Margaret, who was at first inclined to be shy and to recede from the candour of her avowal, soon found herself able to lean upon his chivalry while giving him spontaneously all that could not have been wrested from her by demands.

"I'll take you away," he said. "We'll get away out of the civilised crowd into the old Homeric places, where one smells the sea and has the wind in one's teeth. I'd like to see you wet with

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spray from head to foot, with your hair whipping out behind you in wet black streamers like seaweed, and you leaning to the spring of the deck under the thud of the racing seas in half a gale from the North Atlantic."

"I should be down in the cabin, feeling very unwell, I expect," Margaret said, ruefully shaking her head. "I've never been on the sea."

"Never—been—on the sea! Then the sooner you come the better. I've got a sailing-yacht of my own, a regular clipper, an ocean-goer. I can sail a yacht with any man afloat," Savile declared. "I think I'll chuck politics and carry you off, that is if you'd like to come. Would you?"

"Would I, now? I think I might, to please you. But only for a holiday, you know. I want you to work very hard and be a great man."

"Ambitious, are you? I'm not. There are times when I seem to lose touch with the world and all the men in it. They melt into a kind of dream, and then I have to get away and be alone with the sea. Can you understand? I know so little of you, I don't even know what you like; but you'll have to teach me that."

"We've lots and lots of time before us, but I do want you to work hard. They say you are a crank. Is that true?"

Savile looked doubtful. "I expect what they mean is that I can't stand political jobbery. You wouldn't want me to?"

"No, I love you for being honest. You're so different from—some people."

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"He's an ingenious rascal," Savile said, answering her thought rather than her words. "Poor chap!"

Margaret's face hardened. "I can't pity him," she said abruptly.

"About that treaty business? I felt like that myself at first, but afterwards I came round a bit. People think an awful lot of him, you know. Look at Carteret and Mallinson! Carteret may be a bit soft, but he's always kept very straight, and he simply swears by Yarborough; and Mallinson, who's one of the most level-headed men in town, and an awfully nice chap into the bargain, described him to Hayes as a disinterested genius."

"I do like to hear you defending him," observed Margaret in a low voice; and, thus encouraged, Savile proceeded:

"I expect it was the frightful suddenness of the temptation that made him buckle up; he hadn't time to get himself in hand. Things like that get done in a kind of thunder-clap. If I were to murder a man in a fit of temper, I wouldn't mind being hanged for it, but I'd not expect you to pick up your skirts and pass by on the other side."

"I would love you just the same whatever you did," said Margaret with a fulness and simplicity which took away her own breath as well as Savile's. "But, you know, I don't think any woman would mind a murder as much as a theft. Besides, he might have confessed to it afterwards and so saved his brother. O Mainwaring, I *am* sorry for him, but I can't help abhorring him for what he's done."

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And the more I care for you, the more thankful I am that I never did care for him."

"I don't see that."

"Oh, I do. You don't know how wavering and shallow and uncertain I was, and how I couldn't tell who I cared for, or even whether I was really capable of caring for any one at all. I thought I was one of those contemptible women who are always receiving love and giving affection,—and—I must tell you the truth—I was fascinated by the way he made love to me, and by the clever way he dazzled my eyes. But I suppose a kind of inherited instinct kept me straight, or perhaps it was—it was you in me, deep down, before I knew it with my mind." She laughed and blushed. "Anyhow, I never did give myself away to him at all, except, in a quite different way, this afternoon, and that I'm glad of, now; I hope I did hurt him."

"Vindictive?"

"Absolutely vindictive, and I'll tell you why if you like."

"Ha! so there's a reason, is there?" Savile asked. He got up languidly and came and leaned over the back of Margaret's chair, so that she could not watch his face; otherwise probably the story would not have been told. Margaret spoke deliberately, quite aware that her words carried danger to Yarborough, but convinced that she was only meting out to each the due reward of his own conduct; precisely how her utterance would act on Savile she could not even guess.

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"Mainwaring, did any one ever put the theft of that treaty down to you, yourself?"

"My dear girl, no! Considering that it ruined me and all the rest of us."

"People will say anything if it's only malicious enough. Are you sure?"

"Well, I think I may say I'm perfectly positive. Estcourt would have put me up to it if they had; he's a thorough old gossip, is Tony—knows all the scandal. Why?"

"Because Mr. Yarborough told me you stole it. He said, if I asked you, you wouldn't have a word to say for yourself; you might deny it, but you couldn't disprove."

There was so long a silence after the truth was out that Margaret turned in her chair and looked up. Savile was standing up, his arms folded; all expression seemed to be driven from his face, and his gray eyes, darkened by a singular dilation of the pupil, were fixed absently on some vision invisible in the fading daylight. Margaret jumped up and put her hand on his arm.

"Oh, what are you going to do?" she asked.

Savile started under her touch, came back to life, and looked down at her, smiling. "Do? Nothing, dear girl—or at any rate nothing that need bother you. I sha'n't get hurt."

"I'm not afraid for *you*. What are you going to do to Mr. Yarborough?"

"I want to talk things over with him, that's all."

"Mainwaring, you mustn't! You'll hurt him."

"Not unless he gets in my way," Savile answered.

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He moved towards the door: Margaret sprang to intercept him, and put her back against it.

"No, Mainwaring, you mustn't!" she said breathlessly. "You'd make me feel so mean for having told you. Besides, I *am* so sorry for him."

"I believe you're half in love with him, after all."

"Yes, I am, but I love you better," Margaret averred boldly. "For my sake, forgive him!"

"No, you don't understand; forgiveness wouldn't meet the case."

"At least don't go to him while you're mad with passion!"

Without passion and without relenting, Savile quietly passed his arm about her waist and put her aside. "No, you don't understand," he said. "Women never do. Yarborough hasn't played me fair, and I've got to square accounts with him: the reckoning has run on too long already. I'll not get hurt, and I'll not hurt him more than I can help; but we've got to fight it out. Don't you try to meddle."

Wrath, persuasion, entreaty rose to Margaret's lips, and died there, so plain was it that Savile would brook no further interference. No more was said on either side. He kissed her good-bye and went out; and Margaret, left alone to play the inevitable woman's part of waiting, went up to her room to dress for dinner and pray for her lover's salvation.

XIV

NIGHTFALL: HAST THOU FOUND ME, O MINE ENEMY?

THE sun had set, the moon had risen: one by one came the stars, pricking out points of fire amid the sky's transparent amethyst. An evening chilliness refreshed the parched air, bringing all London, except the tiny minority which makes its laws and sets its fashions, forth into the streets. Savile, driving rapidly through the teeming squares, first to his own rooms, and thence to Anthony Estcourt's lodgings near Lincoln's Inn, cursed the city and all its inhabitants, for getting in his way.

The barrister was at home, lying back in a lounge-chair with a cigar and a novel of Flaubert's, idle as usual. At Savile's entrance he looked up and laid his book aside.

"Incarnate energy, come and have a— Hullo! what's up?"

"I want you to come on a little pasear with me: will you?"

"Where to?" asked Estcourt.

"You shall see when we get there."

"Savile, what's up?"

"Will you come, yes or no?"

"What shall you do if I don't?"

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"Go alone," answered Savile without hesitation. Estcourt got up, peering narrowly into the colourless strong face.

"Won't you wait a bit?" he urged. "You don't know what you look like, old man. You look like Ajax going to be avenged of his enemies."

"Dare say: only if Ajax felt half as keen as I do I'm sorry for his enemies. Get your hat, Tony, and look sharp: I'm not waiting."

Estcourt, lacking courage to resist, gathered up his hat and stick, and threw on a light overcoat to cover his evening dress. "I don't possess a revolver," he said, forlornly trying to laugh off the dread which Savile inspired in him, "but I've got an old blunderbuss: shall I bring it along?"

Savile laughed rather grimly, as if he enjoyed the spectacle of Estcourt's nervousness. "I'm armed for both," he said, showing the muzzles of a pair of revolvers in the pocket of his coat.

Estcourt recoiled in horror. "Look here," he said, "is this a duel or a murder?"

"Say an execution: I'm taking you as a witness."

"Savile, what is up? Who've you had the row with?"

"See by - and - by," Savile assured him grimly. "Come along."

Estcourt followed him. Savile's hansom was waiting at the door. The two men got into it, and Savile gave the direction: "Drive to the National Gallery."

"My good chap, what's the use of taking me to look at pictures?" Estcourt protested. "I don't know a Greuze from a Whistler!"

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Savile turned on him with a movement full of impatience, and so violent that Estcourt shrank as from a blow: but he did not speak, and neither did Estcourt speak any more after that. Ere long, they reached Trafalgar Square, a dim realm blurred with shadows, and spotted with flitting lamps: the moon looked down upon it like a white ghost through the illuminated tracery of a gigantic sky-sign, and the ugly building which was their goal, lit by conflicting half-lights, loomed up before them in a vaguely grandiose design of steps and pillars and massed architectural darkness. At the corner of St. Martin's Lane they got out, and, still in silence, Savile led the way along the crowded pavement, shouldering the lesser breed of the city to right and left, as a ship's hull severs the waves. Bicyclists slid by on noiseless wheels, like goblin shadow-shapes with eyes of fire: empty drays roared along the narrow road-way: along the western frontage stripes of cold moonlight alternated with rectangles of darkness and rows of blazing gas, and everywhere the place was alive with groups which dissolved and reproduced themselves like a crowd on the stage, with the eternal unchangeable changefulness of a London street at night. When they came to the third or fourth street that turned off to the right, Savile halted at the corner, and looked up and down as if to be sure of his direction. Narrow, dark, and ill-favoured, it wound away between the towering gloom of factory walls: tier upon tier of windows glowed, high above their heads, like windows in the sky. The ponderous buildings shook and throbbed and

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roared with the thunder of machinery, like prisoned giants labouring for their puny masters. The road was up hard-by where Savile stood, and a trench was dug beside the pavement, and surrounded by a light barricade studded with red lamps: beside the iron shanty where the workmen took their meals stood a tall iron tripod, holding a brazier of glowing charcoal. The night wind fanned the embers, and cast a crimson glow over Savile's face: in the hellish light Estcourt hardly knew him, so white and strange were the immobile features, so fixed in dread resolve, inured to the prospect of death. Estcourt was completely startled, and hung back: but Savile, turning and saying, "Come," he yielded to the constraint of Savile's power and went with him.

They turned at last into the narrow, broken, sloping cul-de-sac of Bexton Street, buttressed by lofty walls, where the outer moonlight and the smoky lamps within fought a kind of sword-play in snow and lurid gold. Here the echoes and reverberations and pulsations of the great machines raged, concentrated: Savile's trained ear could faintly distinguish between the sliding clank of levers, the thud of hammers, and the intricate hum of wheels. Yarborough's dumb little house confronted them, holding its secrets, as of old: no chink or cranny of light escaped. Amid that raging wilderness of noise its very silence was eloquent.

Savile stood on the pavement, his experienced glance remarking every feature of its pseudo-rustic front, the lightning-rod planted against the angle of the wall, the rickety balcony running along under

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the French windows of the first floor fifteen feet from the ground. He laid his hands to the rod: it was strong, and they were alone in the alley. Silently he went up it hand over hand with the ease of a sailor, and clambered upon the balcony. Estcourt followed, with more difficulty, and with an uneasy feeling that there might be a constable near: but the police rarely troubled Bexton Street by night. Savile, who was not nervous, walked the length of the balcony, scanning each window in turn. At the fourth, or furthest, aperture he paused, and beckoned to Estcourt to come nearer.

“What is it?” Estcourt asked in a whisper. “Oh! by Jove!”

Rendered sound-proof and impregnable by a double thickness of plate-glass, backed by massive oaken shutters, the building was nevertheless not light-proof; for, close to the upper hinge, the oak was pierced with a couple of holes about an inch in diameter, left probably by the displacement of a bar or chain. Looking through the lower of these, while Savile looked through the other, Estcourt found that it commanded a partial view of a big bare room, brilliantly lit up with electric light. In the centre of his circular field of vision Yarborough sat, working, before a table laden with books and papers. Alone in his kingdom of labour, alone still more in the intense abstraction of thought, he seemed removed by worlds and ages from the dilettante who watched him, or from the unripe boy who had sat in the same chair a few months ago. Taken unaware, he revealed, not the charlatan, but the

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statesman: and he had this profound advantage over his spies, that, while they were thinking chiefly of themselves, he was fixed exclusively upon his work. At a loss for a word, he threw back his head and looked forth before him: looked directly into the eyes of Estcourt, who started back with a movement of alarm. Savile, less susceptible, did not budge: he knew that Yarborough could not see him, and that was all he cared about.

"What do you want to do now?" Estcourt whispered. "This sort of thing is so confoundedly ungentlemanly. Oh, don't smile like that, you give me the blues!"

"Look, look," said Savile in his ordinary tone. "He can't hear us. He had the room built to rehearse his speeches in. You might fire a rifle in that room and hardly be heard from the street. He's clean off his guard, as if it were the Day of Judgment."

Estcourt obeyed, completely fascinated, his weaker nature dominated by Savile's stronger will. Together they watched and waited, while the slow minutes of the night went by.

Yarborough laid his pen aside, and his lips moved, as if in recitation. Presently he sprang up and began to pace the room with rapid, nervous steps, passing from their ken and reappearing. His lips moved incessantly: he gesticulated occasionally with his hands, but only very slightly: swift, flexible, significant gestures. They could not hear one syllable of what he said, yet he was undoubtedly speaking aloud: from his face, and the movements of his lips, one might gather that sometimes his voice

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rose to a cry. It was an oration in dumb show. The spectators of this unstudied human drama seemed to be violating secrets of which they could not distinguish one word. The cold of the night, and a sense of strangeness in the whole scene, so oppressed Estcourt that he shivered suddenly and violently from head to foot. Gradually Yarborough became more composed: he stood still, folded his arms, and uttered his last inaudible words. He bent his head and stood for a moment quiet: then began to gather up his papers.

"He is going," said Estcourt, with a sigh of relief.

"Not yet," Savile answered inexorable. "Watch."

Yarborough gathered up a sheaf of papers and laid them neatly together: next he consulted his watch, an old silver timepiece, worthless except for its original purpose. Lastly, he came and stood beside the empty hearth, so close to his spies that they could almost have laid hands on him, had no barrier intervened. The only ornament on the stucco mantelshelf consisted of a cabinet photograph in a silver frame, which stood with its back obliquely turned to the window, invisible to Savile; but he could read plainly enough the passion of desire and suffering which set its ravaging mark on Yarborough's features, as he stood, hands in pockets, cynically regarding the pictured face. Estcourt had had enough: he stepped back from the window.

"Savile, I won't stand this," he said.

"No more will I, old boy," Savile answered, with a light merry note in his voice. "Come round here, Tony." Estcourt was again constrained to follow

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him, not without curiosity. Of the four windows that opened on the balcony, three were of the French shape, and very broad: the central one was small and dark, and looked as if it might open on a passage. Savile struck the glass with his clenched fist, and shivered it: he put his hand in and shook the shutters. They were fastened, but insecurely. He gripped them in his two hands and brought his weight to bear on them. They tore and split, and fell apart. Through the wrecked wood-work Savile clambered in, signing to Estcourt to follow him.

They found themselves in a narrow passage, lighted only by a single tongue of gas turned very low. At one end, a flight of stairs ran down to the little hall and up to the attics above: two doors opened to their left, one on the right. Savile pointed to the latter. "Yarborough's door," he said. "Padded and built double, like the shutters. I'm his landlord: but when I gave him leave to make those alterations, I didn't know how convenient they'd turn out."

"I wish to Heaven you'd come away!" said Estcourt miserably.

"All in good time, when I've paid my debt of honour," Savile retorted. "Come on, Tony: don't funk."

He tried the handle of Yarborough's door: it was not locked. He went in noiselessly, followed by Estcourt: who felt himself, from that moment, a powerless spectator of a singularly grim play. Yarborough was still gazing at Margaret's photograph,

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which he had taken up in his hand. He did not hear Savile enter. He received no warning that he was not alone till Savile, coming up quietly behind him, suddenly dropped a hand on his shoulder.

"Drop that," he said.

Yarborough stood motionless as death for a few seconds, no longer: his first conscious act was to slip Margaret's portrait into his bosom. "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" he said. He had not once turned or looked at Savile.

"That photograph is mine, hand it over."

"Not I."

"Good: then I shall have to take it by force, and I'm precisely in the mood for doing so."

Yarborough turned at that, and faced his enemy. Savile stood over him, faintly smiling, languid with excess of strength: and deadly power and deadly temper were so allied in his look that Yarborough saw that he might as well have been in the hands of an actual madman. "Savile, do you know you're crazy?" he said. "Let me recommend you to go home and take a dose of bromide of potassium."

"Thanks: the photograph?"

"The photograph is mine."

"Yes, by theft," said Savile, with an indolent laugh. He transferred his grip in a moment from Yarborough's shoulder to his waist, lifted him from his feet and held him crushed against his side, while with his free hand he wrenched the portrait from its resting-place: then he let Yarborough go.

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"Next time," he remarked, "perhaps you'll make less fuss."

Yarborough leaned against the table, whiter than Savile: his shirt was torn, and he made a pretence of arranging it, to get his breath and command his temper. As he did so, his glance fell for the first time on Estcourt, standing with his back against the closed door.

"Ah," he said coolly, "two to one? No wonder you are valorous, gentlemen."

"Oh, Tony's only come to see fair play: I shouldn't need his help to break your backbone between my hands, don't you know."

"As a matter of curiosity, may I ask how you got in?"

"By the passage-window. Estcourt, there, had scruples: he felt burglarious. But I reckon it was diamond cut diamond, eh?"

"And what did you come for, apart from murder and sudden death?"

"Imprimis, to receive your congratulations: I'm going to be married."

The colour came into Yarborough's cheeks as he remembered how he had been spied on, and saw by Savile's taunting glance that he was meant to remember: he bowed silently.

"Made a fool of yourself, didn't you? What was that you said this morning in Manton's about spiritual affinity, or precontract—I forget the precise term?"

Yarborough controlled himself to say steadily, "You are generous."

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"My generosity has limits, which you've passed. You hound! how dared you tell her that lie about me?"

The whirlwind of Savile's passion, which had been steadily rising ever since his parting with Margaret, broke loose in those words, and seemed to envelop Yarborough in darkness and points of fire. But Yarborough was no weakling: his were the kindred qualities of fortitude and racial pride which, when they act on a nervous temperament, produce the most durable kind of courage. He walked across to the table and sat down on the edge of it, swinging one foot and humming a tune between his set lips: his look for Savile was wary and cool, though Estcourt was wiping the sweat from his forehead with his handkerchief.

"Did you come here to inform me of the death of Queen Anne?" he asked, "or merely to be impertinent?"

"No: I came to get you to sign a confession."

"By force, if need be?"

"By force, if need be."

"Have you got the interesting document ready drawn up?"

Savile drew a folded sheet of thick white note-paper from his pocket. "It's all in order," he said, "and Estcourt and I'll be witnesses. Come, pull yourself together, Tony: never seen a worm on a line before?"

And he began to read it aloud, while Estcourt leaned inert against the door, and Yarborough swung his foot and hummed the "Marseillaise."

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"Wednesday, *August* 5, 1905.

"I confess:

"(i.) That on May 16th last I stole from the safe at Chans-ton a draft of the proposed treaty between England and Germany drawn up by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and given by the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to my brother Sir Edmund Yarborough and sold it to the papers:

"(ii.) That I had no instigators or accomplices either before or after the fact:

"(iii.) That the statement made by me contrary to that effect was a wilful lie.

"(Signed)

"Witnesses:

"There! that's not legal phraseology, but it's good enough for me, I reckon," Savile ended, laying down the curious document on Yarborough's writing-pad. "Have the goodness to put your name to that, will you?"

"Do you really imagine I shall sign it?"

"I do."

"Ah! and what's your line of argument?"

"These," Savile answered, taking the revolvers from his pocket and laying them on the mantel-shelf. Estcourt cried out, and started forward: but Savile turned upon him with lifted hand. "Not another step," he said. "Get back against the door. You fool! I could kill you, couldn't I? And I will too, if you don't keep out of my way."

"You're going to shoot me?" said Yarborough.

"No: you *shall* sign."

"Clever of you, very, if you can make me do it."

"I'll make you do it, never fear."

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"I would rather die twice over than sign that screed of yours."

"Would you rather die twelve times over?"

Yarborough made no reply, and Savile saw a curious flicker of sensation pass over his face, for which, if it proceeded from cowardice, Savile was hardly disposed to blame him. He was alone: he was close to death, and death in a peculiarly enigmatic and terrible form, attended by every circumstance that could embitter and degrade: and he was helpless, for not only was Savile armed, but he had the awful advantage of bodily strength, and could have stifled his slighter antagonist like an infant, or thrashed him like a dog, his cries unheard, his struggles unavailing. Savile took off his overcoat and threw it across a chair: he stood by the mantelshelf, very tall and strong in his rough, gray, belted Norfolk-jacket and knickerbockers.

"Oblige me by going and standing over against the wall yonder, will you? If you don't, I shall have to carry you, and tie you up somehow with cords."

Yarborough got off the table and walked past Estcourt to the end of the room: there he placed himself with his back to the wall, and faced Savile.

"This is gloriously dramatic," he remarked. "You should turn playwright and send it to the Adelphi."

"Am I to fire?"

"Allons, beau Seigneur! fire away!"

"I know you're scared. I saw you tremble."

"You misinterpreted me. I am inexpressibly

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glad to die; almost as much in love with death as I was with Margaret."

Savile lifted his hand: the light flashed on the nipple of the revolver. "Arms out, please," he said. "I want you crucified."

Yarborough extended his arms and stood cross-wise against the wall. Savile took very deliberate aim, finding his hand unexpectedly unsteady. There was a flash, a slight report, and a curl of smoke. Estcourt uttered a sort of stifled moan.

"Missed," said Yarborough tranquilly.

"Hit," Savile responded with equal calm. "I have nicked your hair, which was what I aimed at. Where shall I hit you next?"

"Wherever you like: but when did you go crazy?"

Savile fired again: the bullet passed through Yarborough's coat.

"Will you sign?"

"Lunatic! I'll see you in Hades first."

Again the revolver cracked: this time it grazed Yarborough's outstretched hand, and a few drops of blood trickled down and stained the plaster of the wall.

Estcourt came a step forward: he tried to speak, but his voice died away into an inarticulate gasp. At last he got out a word. "Savile!"

"Well?"

"Let him go! Good God, it's too horrible! Do let him go!"

"What, now?" said Savile. "I didn't know you were afraid of blood, Tony: he's more of a man than you are."

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And he fired again: and this time a red stain oozed from under Yarborough's other hand.

"Sorry," said Savile apologetically. "That really was a miss, for I didn't mean to hit."

Estcourt dropped on his knees and began to pray aloud. Yarborough shrugged his shoulders: the situation continued to strike him as rather absurd.

"Go on, Savile," he said. "My arms are getting stiff: finish your job."

Savile fired rapidly: neither flash nor detonation followed. Astonished, he made a hurried examination of the revolver, which proved to be empty.

"If the other should be empty too!" he exclaimed. "By Jove! what a fool I am! I believe these were what I was practising with yesterday. I looked to them in a hurry to-night, and never saw they were only partly loaded."

Yarborough stood motionless, like one indeed crucified: Estcourt raised his head and desisted from prayer. At last Savile looked up from the second revolver.

"Two shots more," he said contentedly. "That will settle your business, I take it. Once more, will you sign that paper? I wish you would, as a personal favour."

"I can't," said Yarborough.

"You won't? Then—"

The bullet scored a tiny incision in the side of Yarborough's bare throat: this pin-prick of a wound, which might so easily have been fatal, proved how mad Savile was in his recklessness. Suddenly Estcourt, who had gone back to his old post by the

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door, gave a slight start and seemed to listen intently.

"Savile," he cried out, "Savile, are you going to shoot him?"

"I shall have to put the next between his eyes. Why, Tony?"

"Don't make me stand by and look on—don't! I—I simply can't stand it."

Savile looked at him wonderingly. "Can't stand it?" he repeated: "but what do you want to do?"

"Let me get out of the room, that's all. I swear to you on my honour I won't leave the house.—I—I can't stand seeing it done."

"You'll call somebody in," Savile said doubtfully.

"No, on my honour, no! I'll go down and wait in the hall till—till it's over. Oh, I never saw anything so frightful in my life! Let me go."

Savile shrugged his shoulders. "Go, if you like," he said. He turned again to Yarborough, throwing Estcourt the key of the door: while Estcourt unlocked it and fled, Savile stood carefully examining his revolver. Whatever he had meant to do in the first instance, he was now past all power of rational reasoning or framing his plans anew: he could go neither backward nor forward, except along the line he had marked out for himself previously. He walked down the room to Yarborough: he lifted the revolver and held it between his eyes, its barrel touching his forehead. "Look here," he said, "am I to fire? Do you want to die, and face God? Are you so keen to go out into the dark? Odd how some men dislike telling the truth! Mind, I am going to

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kill you: and no man's clever enough to know how much agony can be compressed into a second, when it's the second of death. Upon my soul, I could pity you for your pluck if you weren't such a devil of a scoundrel. . . . Well, I'm to fire, then. Good-bye. . . ."

His finger was on the trigger, when there came into Yarborough's eyes, which were fixed on the door, a look so singular, so piercing, so coercent (as if he saw a vision) that involuntarily Savile too glanced back over his shoulders. There in the doorway stood Estcourt and Carteret. In the twinkling of an eye Savile fired; but Yarborough had dropped on his knees as Savile turned his head, and the shot—the last shot,—buried itself in the wall. Savile's face grew livid: he stooped, he lifted Yarborough from his knees to his feet; he raised him like a child high above his head, and dashed him with all his strength sideways and downwards through the air. Yarborough fell against the open door some yards away, and lay without stirring. Savile would have sprung at him again, but in one breath Carteret and Estcourt flung themselves upon him. They caught him at an advantage, and Carteret, who was as agile as a cat, tripped him up; he fell backward with his whole weight to the floor. The shock of such a fall stunned him.

"Handkerchief," said Carteret.

He took his own handkerchief and Estcourt's, and supplementing them with his braces, he contrived to tie Savile hand and foot. Then he got up and ran to Yarborough's side.

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"Thee hurt? Christian, art hurt?" he stammered, his voice sharp to impatience.

Yarborough sat up and looked at him: he shook his head. After a minute speech came back.

"Hurt? No. But—giddy."

"Is he cracked?" Carteret asked, denoting Savile by a nod.

"With—temper."

"You *are* hurt, aren't you, Christian?"

"No. Give me your arm."

Carteret complied, and Yarborough, subduing a gasp of pain, got to his feet. "I fell against the door," he said. "It's knocked the wind out of me. He's—had twelve shots at me, Carteret."

"Christian, art thee sure thee aren't hurt?"

"Quite: I thought I might have broken a rib or two, but I haven't." He ran his hands over himself delicately, but with another little smothered sigh of pain. "No, there's nothing broken. Only bruises. What a madman!"

Savile was sitting up: he looked still completely dazed and stupefied. "I—I think I've been mad," he said. "I knew I should murder somebody."

"Well, you haven't," Yarborough said, with a cynical laugh which made him wince with pain. "You'd better go home now, hadn't you? Estcourt, take him home."

"I expect you think I'm an awful coward, don't you?" Estcourt said to Yarborough, while Carteret loosened the bandages.

"Not I! You and I together would have been

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no match for him, even unarmed. Carteret would have been equally useless if he'd had another shot in the locker."

"Thanks: but I shall never forgive myself."

Of the four actors in the scene, Estcourt, white-lipped and shaking, was the most completely unnerved. Savile looked white and dazed, but steady. Carteret's emotion only made him irritable. Yarborough was sick with pain, but perfectly cool; and both he and Carteret looked, moved, and spoke like their ordinary selves.

"Well, gentlemen," said Yarborough mockingly, as Savile and Estcourt were going out together, "I observe with regret that you haven't the grace to make me an apology."

Savile turned on the threshold and looked back at him: a long, critical look.

"My code of morality may be uncivilised," he said passionlessly. "Dare say it is: it acquits me on that score. I asked you to own up that you'd lied, and so you had: and Estcourt and Carteret know it as well as you do. I'll apologise to God, Christian Yarborough, but not to you."

There was a long silence between Carteret and Yarborough when the echo of Savile's steps had died away. At length Yarborough took up the written form of confession, which Savile had left lying on the table, and gave it to Carteret, with a most bitter smile.

"Am not I a fool, Cecil?" he said. "I consented to be shot, rather than sign that piece of unpalatable truth."

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Carteret adjusted his spectacles and read the paper: then he took them off and glanced very keenly at Yarborough. "Truth?" he said in an odd tone. "What is truth?"

"Don't be enigmatic," said Yarborough. "Did you come for anything special?"

"Only to look thee up."

"Estcourt heard your knock, I suppose, and ran down to let you in?"

"Dragged me in by the scruff of my neck, thee means; a nice young man, that!"

"He can't stand against a man of Savile's calibre, that's all: and I don't wonder. Carteret!"

"My lad?"

"I'm deadly, deadly tired."

Carteret drew Yarborough's hand through his arm with a movement of womanly tenderness. "There, there!" he said, softly stroking Yarborough's fingers, "I'm not going to let thee do any more work to-night. Come away home with me, lad, out of this ill-omened little house: bed's the best place for thee, I'm certain."

XV

MIDNIGHT: WINE OF TRIUMPH

IT was now close on eleven o'clock: the city was already deserted, and lay bare to the stars, floating like isles of light upon a solemn ocean of amethyst. The damp air of night, chill with remembered rain, breathed fresh upon Yarborough's senses as he was driven along by Carteret's side. When they reached Pierpont Street, the house was shut up and dark, for the master was not expected to return. Yarborough was sternly bidden remain in the cab, while Carteret went and hammered at the door. It was opened to them after some delay by Yarborough's valet in his shirt and trousers.

"I beg pardon for keeping you waiting, Mr. Carteret, sir," he stammered: then, catching sight of Yarborough, he flew down the steps to offer his arm. "Why, you've never and been and got hurt, my lord?" Carteret heard him ejaculate.

"There, now, drop that absurd nonsense and help me up to my room," Yarborough answered: and Mornington, with evident pride, gave his arm to his master for the ascent of the stair, while Carteret followed with the queerest mixed feelings of surprise and touched affection. Yarborough's room was an ascetic-looking chamber, and it was

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pleasant to Carteret to observe with what assiduous care Mornington fetched cushions and piled them on the sofa, and kindled a fire in the empty grate.

"A cup of coffee for Mr. Carteret and a thimbleful of cognac for me, and then you can be off to bed, Mornington; I shall not want you any more to-night."

Mornington went out with a disappointed air, and Carteret, warming his little patent-leather boots at the fire, laughed softly.

"No man is a hero—" he suggested, with a quizzical side-glance. "How does thee work it, pray, my lord?"

"I should amend the proverb and say, 'No hero is a hero,'" Yarborough answered wearily, turning amid his cushions to find an easier posture. "I think I shall have to get rid of him, though: he bores me."

Carteret was moved to smile at this transparent bit of cynicism, but he restrained himself and said only, "My lad, you're very tired."

"I'm tired, and I'm sick and sad as well. O Carteret! what in all the world is there so bitter as Dead Sea fruit?"

"What's Dead Sea fruit? I'm all in the dark, you know."

"I've no heart for the morrow, that's what's wrong with me," said Yarborough. He turned again, so that his face was hidden. "Oh! confound that man, I'm glad I faced him out. I should have felt degraded even below myself if I had given in. The mind dependent upon the body, and the body upon Mainwaring Savile's brutal whim: there's a

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noble conception of life for you! But I'll not give in: I resent and resist the physical dominion of pain."

Mornington coming in with a tray put him to silence, somewhat to the relief of Carteret, who sat down by his side and sipped his cup of coffee.

"Pah! too sweet," he grumbled. "Here's a note just come for thee, my lad."

It lay on the tray, a thin blue envelope, with little in its appearance to distinguish it from a tradesman's bill. Yarborough glanced at it with indifference.

"If it were to offer me the premiership, I wouldn't read it to-night. Let it be. Who brought it?"

"Mornington says it's been waiting for thee since eight o'clock. An official in uniform brought it, and couldn't be pacified when he heard thee was out."

"I get a score of letters by every post, and half of them go straight into the fire. This has been a long day, Carteret."

"Has it, my lad?"

"But it's over and done with now, and can be locked up and laid away among the things I don't care to remember. And yet, you know, it's no good blinking facts: I haven't the slightest desire ever to get up and go to work again."

"Report was saying to-night that Lord Hayes had definitely handed in his resignation this afternoon."

"Report lied, probably—if one may argue from analogy. Or if he did, what's that to me?"

Carteret put up his eyebrows. "I fancied it might be a good deal."

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"Were you such a fool as to be taken in by my gasconnades? They were ambitious enough, Lord knows," said Yarborough scornfully. "If I were thirty years older and emasculate by office-seeking, I might have a chance: but I'm not born for success. I am, and shall always be, a failure."

Carteret, finishing his coffee, looked at him severely over the edge of the cup: then he set it down carefully, and got up. "I am bound to say I never heard any young man talk more foolishly," he remarked, "but perhaps it's excusable, seeing 's thee's evidently dropping to sleep. Go straight to bed like a good boy, and don't dare to get up till I come round in the morning, or I'll loose a doctor at thee. Good-night."

Sure that he was doing the best thing for Yarborough, he turned the gas low and departed: his soft little step pattered away down the stair: a vague thud announced the careful shutting of the street door. He was gone, and Yarborough was left alone in the semi-darkness: alone with his own thoughts and unrequited memories.

About an hour later, Yarborough, struggling painfully back from the hell of feverish insomnia, saw the unopened letter lying on the table within reach of his hand. Too exhausted to get beyond speculation, he lay back on his pillow and watched it: the shape of the small square envelope, the colour and texture of the rough blue paper, were vaguely familiar to him. The typed address gave him no clue, except a suggestion that the writer wished to avoid publicity. Every unopened letter is like a

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leaf out of the book of the oracles : it is a coin of unknown value, a cast of the dice in the game of life. Yarborough shrank from the exertion of tearing open the letter, or believed he did: but he was fascinated by it: and presently he found himself holding it in his hand, without clearly knowing how it got there. His will remaining inert, the body had acted automatically, under the viceroyalty of some secret inner mechanism of thought. Having got it, he let it drop from his lax fingers: but some stinging remembrance of Savile's insolence brought him back to it in a few seconds, and now as a way of escape. He opened it and drew out a sheet of paper, evenly folded, and covered with cramped, bold writing. Ere the listless wonder over an unknown hand had formulated itself in his brain, it was superseded by a conviction which broke over him like a lightning flash. The letter was signed "Hayes."

It was the cup of the wine of triumph.

And, by a stroke of the irony of destiny, it was given into his hand in the hour of Dead Sea fruit. In the very hour when all the years and all the labours of his life seemed to him like sand which the wind blows through the desert, the cup was put into his hands, of which if he drank he became a bondsman of that labour for ever. How dull, cramped, and petty was the arena: how insignificant the part that he was called on to play! How long seemed the working years without Margaret, how insufferable the degradation, how bitter the abnegation required of him, and him alone! The old longing, the old insuperable prayer awoke in Yar-

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borough: "*Oh that I had wings like a dove! then would I fly away and be at rest.*"

Prayer was translated into action: Yarborough got up and went to his desk. The throb of unexpected pain which shot through him when he moved his injured arm drew from him an exclamation of annoyance: he had literally forgotten his injuries. He wrote a few lines on a sheet of paper, addressed the envelope to Lord Hayes, and sealed it with his private seal. No one stirred in the sleeping house as he ran softly down the stair and let himself out into the street. There was a pillar-box just across the way: he dropped the letter into it, and, turning, looked up and down the wide, empty, moonlit street.

The clock of a church hard-by struck the hour: twelve. As if it had been a signal, bells began to chime, far and near: a musical peal came from over the river, and from the distant Clock Tower a deep, plangent vibration, like a sob, came, wind-borne, from the bell that marks the hours of England's counsellors. As many tones of melancholy harmony seemed to blend in Yarborough's ears, as the million tones of light and shadow that blended in the moonlit sky. And suddenly London herself seemed to speak to him, with the cry of her populace in travail, so many souls that know not their right hand from their left: patiently working, patiently and wearily expecting to be delivered. He heard the cry of that great captive host, the wasted voices of children born to starvation, the curses of women born to shame, the fierce murmuring of men born to

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thralldom for scanty bread: and he knew that he could never forsake their service.

A quarter of an hour later, a second missive was posted, briefer than the first.

"My Lord, Tear up the other letter. God helping me, I will do my best.

"Yours very truly,

"C. Y."

For Yarborough, as for many others unknown, the cup of the wine of triumph was the cup of God's sacrament, imbittered with tears.

The night was very still, brooded over, one might think, by the wings of unseen powers. A little this side of eternity the stars hung, like golden ships on a crystal sea: the moon slept on a western tide of azure. Compassed about by the co-ordinate array of the spheres, she dropped a Jacob's ladder of pale light and purity from the bright workings of heaven to earth with her warring cities. Yarborough walked with his face towards her face, and still had that sense of immortality overshadowing him. The realm of the night and of the cold moon, which none of earth's cries and prayers can ever reach, seemed to make of all his cares something quite small and unimportant. He saw life more vividly than ever before in its relation to eternity: and was amazed to find its problems simplified by that comparison. The resurrection of the dead was still, to him, an old wives' fable: but he felt the eternity of the universe and of the power that works in it: and to that power he was ready to submit, even though

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its will was to rob him of the breath of life and turn him to the dust whence he sprang.

It was close on one o'clock when he reached Savile's house, but the lamps were burning still in the lower rooms. None, however, was lighted in the smoking-room, into which he was shown to wait for Savile. The moon looked in at the window, between rich foreign brocades, blackened by her chill and bluish light: upon the inlaid floor she cast a marquetry of pale silver, and struck white sparks and flaws of cold flame from the rack of Damascene swords that hung against the wall. Out of reach of her levin-lighted fingers a mirror leaned from broken folds of shadow, full of ghostly reflections touched by lightnings and glooms. When Savile entered, he was felt and heard rather than seen: then a pale face looked down at Yarborough, and he spoke, leaning his hand on the table.

"I'm at your service: will you have lights?"

"No, I like the dark better: and I will not keep you long. I have to give you the confession you asked for."

Savile took the paper from Yarborough's hand and read it by the moonlight.

"So: you've signed it, I see," he said. "Why?"

"For you to give to Margaret."

"I must tell you," Savile said after a pause, "though it may sound brutal, that this is quite unnecessary. Miss Carew does not, as a matter of fact, distrust me."

"My dear fellow, I know that she accepts your word as implicitly as she doubts mine. My motive

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is not what you think. You do not perhaps know that I am to be premier?"

"I did not know it, because Lord Hayes does not confide in an under-secretary: but I've been too much behind the scenes to be surprised. Let me congratulate you."

"Thanks: and now you're probably wondering why I'm here."

"No: I was only wondering why you chose this particular moment to make me a present of a scandalous secret."

"I am not such a tyro as to believe that every man is a rogue because I am a rogue myself. I might trade on that paper: *you* would rather die. I give it you as a refined species of bribe, because I want your help."

"My help in what?"

"In forming a cabinet. My own party is weak, both intellectually and numerically: the elder men are incapable, the younger are inexperienced. Our ranks are thinned by death, or I should never have won this unparalleled triumph."

"But this is a coalition you're proposing?"

"Has such a thing never been done before? History repeats itself, that is all: especially when it is spurred by necessity. Now you're going to say that you're at loggerheads with my policy: but be candid, and own that ten times you have been on the brink of quarrelling with your uncle!"

"Lord Ferdinand is a bit deliberate," Savile admitted. "But I'm a Conservative Imperialist myself."

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"And I'm a Liberal Imperialist. Drop the prefix, and join me on the common basis of Empire: it's broad enough."

Savile did not answer: he thought, in his bewilderment, that Yarborough must possess a singularly mercurial temperament. The scene in Bexton Street, not three hours gone by, was fresh in his own mind with every attribute of terror: he was racked by it, haunted, to the exclusion of sleep, by the memory of his own passion. By Yarborough it seemed clear forgotten, a thing out of mind, a trifle, brushed aside by the intrusion of a more serious interest. Savile experienced a check: he was at a loss, confounded by the total change of emotion in Yarborough's mind, so little answerable to his own brooding recollections. They talked at cross-purposes, from different planes of thought. Yarborough's discerning wit entered readily into his embarrassment.

"You can't shake off the memory of Bexton Street?" he said. "I felt the same myself an hour ago, before I read Lord Hayes's letter. After that, it was as if I had passed from one room into the next: the things of the first room had no longer any interest for me. You profess to have excellent reasons for considering me a scoundrel: I reply that you are at perfect liberty to chastise the scoundrel, provided you support the statesman. Do you understand?"

"Can't say I do," said Savile thoughtfully. "Do you mean that you are willing to stand any sort of private kicks for the sake of getting the ha'pence of office?"

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"You've hit it."

"And you bribe me to serve under you by gratifying what you suppose to be my taste in revenge?"

"I certainly did suppose that you wanted that document: you made enough fuss about getting it."

"But an hour back you would have let me shoot you—!" Saville began: and then breaking off he stepped back, throwing out his hands as if he were at the end of his Latin. "Well, I'm out," he confessed. "I beg your pardon, Yarborough, but I'm completely at fault. I guess I've been clean out in my reckoning, all along. Would you mind explaining yourself?"

"By all means," said Yarborough. "I came to do it. What I want is political power, and to get it I must have subordinates worthy of me. I can send Mallinson to the Exchequer—"

"He'll not take it."

"He will, if *I* ask him. I can give Hammersley the War Office, as I once promised him—" Yarborough broke off to laugh, while Savile stared at him.

"Nobody can work with Hammersley: he'll kick over the traces in twenty-four hours."

"Not when I've got the whip-hand of him," Yarborough retorted with an exceedingly arrogant look, which struck Savile as promising lively times for an intractable cabinet. "And you, I want for the Home Office."

"What a tour de force it would be! You seem to have got it all cut and dried."

"Do you think I am such a fool as to plot without

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planning? or do you suppose I mean to get together a cabinet of freaks? I trust that the only bizarre figure in the new ministry will be the prime-minister."

"But it strikes me that I shall be a tolerably bizarre figure myself," Savile objected. "You're asking me to rat, you know."

"I'm asking you to do what Peel did in '46 and Gladstone did in '54. You know yourself that the old ideals of Lord Hayes and your uncle are worn out: there's no virtue in them. I ask you to rat from the old position, pending the formation of a new one. The Conservatives will never again go to the country with their old programme. For a hundred yards ahead the way lies clear, an Imperial and not a party route: I only ask you to go with me as far as the next cross-roads."

"But my own people—"

"Are too far behind the times to make anything but a split and disorganised opposition. Do not you be too proud to go and learn your lesson of the country, instead of at the dame-school of party."

"The country?" Savile echoed, with true aristocratic disdain. "What's the country?"

"Your master and mine."

"I never knew it."

"Did you not? I believe I am almost alone in believing it."

"Well, I always held I belonged to the governing classes myself."

"To be sure you did! Does not your name figure in Debrett?"

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Savile bit his lip. "That's the shallow sneer of the democrat," he said. "Apart from the question of birth, do you seriously assert that a land-owner, a rich man with thousands of workmen under him, with an educated moral sense and an intellect trained in principles of fair play, hasn't a better right to have his say on a question of government than Hodge the ploughman, with what little wits he ever had muddled away in drinking bad beer?"

"Which has the better right to be heard—the wronged man, or he that did the wrong and got rich by it?"

Savile shrugged his shoulders. "I admit that I argued like a woman," he said, "and you answer me according to my folly."

"I answer you with the voice that rings in my own ears day and night: the voice of the inarticulate oppressed millions whose congregated outcry is not heard so far inland as the waves on our shore."

"What is all this about, in Heaven's name? you must be mad, Yarborough!"

"I am not mad, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. Don't you know it? hear and learn." Yarborough laid his hand, cold as ice, upon Savile's wrist. "Since first I learned to speak and read, I've trained myself for this: I remember as a child and as a boy, at Chanston, that whatever I read or studied I had this end in view. It has been my dream, night and day, day and night, year in, year out. I'm for England body and soul. For England, I gave up Margaret when I thought she loved me. For England, I ruined

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Edmund and drove him into exile. I lied for England: for England I stole that treaty—why? Because it was selling us to Germany. You don't see that, you shut your eyes to it, though even among your own followers heretical murmurs were raised: blind you are, and can't and won't see what you're doing. I must get power: I'm the only man in England who can do the work that's got to be done. Fremantle is too nice to soil his fingers, he wants to work in kid gloves: the fool, he sets his private honour above the honour of England! Let him and all his crew go with clean hands into the everlasting lukewarm perdition which is the eternal heritage of paltering idiots! I thank whatever gods there be, England is mine, not theirs. The man who would die for her or dishonour himself for her will make a better premier than your picturesque sophist." He broke off and turned towards the window, towards the great stars and the holy and solitary moon. "Anglo-Saxon that you are, why don't you laugh at me for such a rhapsody? Other men have lived and died for England: I am only the representative voice of a great host, scattered over the face of the earth, but always loyal, any one of whom has an equal right to be premier on the score of his patriotism. But let us talk as practical men, and I do not despair of convincing you that I have certain ideas which even an aristocratic Conservative need not disdain to assist. Listen! will you hear all that I design to bring about—I, single-handed, alone against the people and their false prophets who cry 'Peace, peace'?"

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Savile mutely bent his head: and Yarborough went on to furnish him with a sketch of his future policy in its twofold aspects of internal and external administration. Freedom was to him no abstraction, but the spirit which is the breath of life: concise and pregnant were his words when he spoke of her. The cleansing of great cities, the enrichment of the lives of the poor, the cheapening of justice, the deepening of education, the purifying responsibility of citizenship, these were the problems which he handled, not with the vague enthusiasm of an idealist, but with the terse and literal detail of a practical politician. He was so far from a blind submission to precedent, that he was likely to get accused of devotion to paradox: but Savile, keeping an open mind, recognised that he was too honest ever to be dragged at the chariot-wheels of his own theories. Old and new alike were weighed on their merits, for Yarborough had that profound love of truth which turns every discussion into a vote by ballot. Savile recalled, not without distaste, the philanthropic concessions of Lord Ferdinand: he was far more in sympathy with Yarborough's splendid impropriety than with the elegant formalism of his uncle. He wondered what Lord Ferdinand would have made of certain trenchant proposals, which assuredly had little to recommend them in the vote - market, except, indirectly, their appeal to that admiration of hardihood which is the mark of a virile country. Passing on, Yarborough sketched out a plan of foreign relations: and here again Savile saw the hand of a master at work,

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rending veils, casting ruthless light upon dark places. Intricacies of Continental policy, over which Savile had racked his brains in vain, suddenly stood plain and bare in the blaze of comprehension: and with the revelation of unsuspected peril, came the marvellous lucidity of a way of escape. Abroad, as at home, Savile saw with astonishment great problems solved as by the touch of a magician, mysteries and shadows illuminated by the prophetic light of those inscrutable eyes. It was all clear, clear as the moonbeams in the gray lake of the sky: yet, when he turned from Yarborough's interpretation and tried to read the crystal for himself, in a moment it became blurred and inexplicable, like the dusk reflections in the clouded mirror. It seemed to him that Yarborough spoke as one of Heaven's oracles.

"So it shall be in the days to come," said Yarborough slowly. "So, in the days to come, I will make it to be. There are two only who are strong enough to shape the destinies of England: God is the greater of these, and I am his vicegerent. Now, do you still think me a charlatan?"

Savile made one last effort. "Can a man serve God by lies?" he asked.

"A man must serve God according to his lights and his day. My creed permits me to lie in the service of England, but not in my own service: I do not say that I have always held to that creed, but I say that the creed is good, whatever the practice may have been. If I commit England to a course of criminal success, I am perfect-

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ly ready to be damned for it in my own proper person."

"You'd be a greater man if you were honest."

"Honest? What is honesty? I don't serve myself by my dishonesty. Do you know that I am ruining myself? I was never a rich man: but I am poor enough in all conscience, since I paid my election bills in Whitney. I live hard: few mechanics harder. I believe there is not a man in England that works longer hours than I do: ay, or as long. In ten years I have had but one holiday: and how has that ended?"

"In heart-break, I fear," Savile said, simply.

Yarborough smiled. "I loved her well," he said. "So well that I'm tired of my life because I've lost her. If I could have my way, my desire, my dream, I'd go to her, and rest my head on her breast, and she should hold me, and I would never go from her again. And after that, my prayer would be to publish that confession and clear Edmund's name, to touch his hand again before I died, to get his pardon for the unspeakable wrong I did him— If you could only know how exceedingly one wearies of the toy sceptre and the tinsel crown! Do you think I care for honours? I foresee them coming on me thick and fast. In ten years I shall have refused a peerage, and I shall probably be married to some woman who will be aristocratic enough for my party, rich enough for my creditors, and fool enough to take me: and what will you be then? You'll be married to the woman you love. But I shall never have Margaret, I shall never hold her in my arms: she

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is yours, and you will take her away from me. Though I beget sons, they will be the sons of a strange woman. When I am an old man, and the best-hated man in England, I shall see you with Margaret by your side and her children on your knee. . . . I was not made for that. Give me my due, Savile, and let me go my way, for it is my right. You must help me to my throne and crown and sceptre: barren honours are they all! You will help me?"

"I'll help you," Savile answered: his voice shook. "I'll serve under you. But I'm sorry for you, Yarborough, and that's the truth. Is it to be always like this?"

"You'd like to bring me to the fire-light? No, let me go: my mission is of the night, and I am appointed no kindlier ally than that white unlistening child of God up yonder." He turned, and lifted his hand towards the window: the moonlight falling across his face showed how calm it was, and how completely estranged from earthly things. "Never grieve for me, Savile: I have all I was framed to have. So you'll serve under me?"

Savile's answer was an unreserved assent. He had meant to make reservations, to qualify, distinguish, limit: but he could not do it that night: he could as soon have thought of striking a bargain with the angel of judgment. Yarborough seemed to take his answer for granted, as if he had never contemplated the possibility that he might be refused. He spoke as an ambassador on behalf of an irresistible power.

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"And so you collect swords," he said a minute later, turning from the window to the stand of quaintly wrought weapons ranged against the wall. "A fascinating pursuit: I know nothing more romantic than to carry off some old treasure of the wicked East, rusted half with crimes and half with good service."

"They are curious," Savile said slowly, thrown off by the sudden change of *venue*. "I'm a bit of an amateur of bronzes. The collection is valuable, I believe."

Yarborough lifted a long curved scimitar that glittered like a snake against the wall. "How the moonlight sparkles on them!" he said. "How cold, foreign, exotic they look! See this bending blade, waved all over like running water: it is beautiful and keen, is it not? It will fight well: probably it has gone through strange vicissitudes already. How it clangs against its fellows, now I let it drop! There's a sort of leaping murder in these Oriental weapons: they are fashioned to cut down an unarmed man, or to strike an armed man from behind. Yet one can turn them to good account, too: they are just as subtle, springing, and alive in the hand of the righteous judge."

"Which fable means?"

"I am like one of your Eastern swords, patterned for murder. I am ingrained with the vices of craft and treachery: I believe I have neither conscience, honour, nor soul: and yet I shall keep England's honour unstained. I give you leave to think what you like of the instrument, but you must respect the

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hand that wields it. Keep that paper of mine, for every word of it is true: and yet, such as I am, you will be my servant to-morrow, because I am only the scimitar in the hand of England. Think of me so, during the years to come. I shall not bore you with many such self-revelations: but when you see me rich and famous, never dream that I would not give all the Dead Sea fruit of ambition for one touch of Margaret's hand, one kiss from the lips of a child of hers and mine. Good-night. You'll hear from me officially to-morrow."

XVI

THE END IS AT HAND

“When autumn sad but sunlit doth appear,
With his gold-hand gilding the falling leaf.”

MIST lay in swathes over the gold of reaped fields: out of its pale sea the trees rose like islands, the darkness of their summer leafage thinned and gilded here and there by frost. Girdled by woodlands, Chanston looked across its terrace and gardens, over the fields and woods, to the dark boundary of the hills, where a red September sun was sinking slowly into a bank of fog. In a dip between the cliffs the sea sparkled out incarnadined by a streak of ruby light: but inland all lights and tones of colour were dimmed by the mist, and autumn, with its memory of May evenings and prescience of advancing storm, was king of all. And upon Chanston itself desolation was coming like an armed man, whose hand had already set a mark on mouldering cornice and broken wall: the Elizabethan tile-work of the roof was patched with cheap slates, the garden was a wilderness of unpruned roses, and a chestnut of the avenue, borne down by the winds of a past winter, lay unregarded along the foot of the terrace, trailing its bare boughs over the crumbling steps.

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The premier's spoiled son stood with his arms crossed on the balustrade of the terrace, looking seawards, and eating peaches out of a basket. Amid age, and decay, and the oncoming of autumn, Justin Yarborough in the unripe growth of his fifteen years might have been taken for an incarnation of spring. Eager eyes had Justin, beaming with faith and innocence, and eager lips, yet with something of his father's full satiric curve; and the soft, thin, young figure, with arms and legs shooting out of his tweed suit, was full of fresh and eager life and sinewy strength, like a young animal, or a budding willow-wand. He stood in the attitude of a listener, breaking out now and again into a few notes of song: it was during such an interval that Yarborough himself came quietly up behind him and touched him on the shoulder.

"You at last!" Justin cried, turning a morning face towards his father. "What an unconscionable time you've been! I've eaten seven peaches while I was waiting."

"I had work to do, and the notes of to-morrow's speech to look over: besides which Carteret rang me up and kept me half an hour at the telephone."

"I've told you heaps of times you oughtn't to do any work on a Sunday," Justin said. He put his hands behind him on the balcony and wriggled himself up into a sitting posture, to bring his eyes on a level with his father's. "Father, how grim you look! Has Carteret been bothering you about that Eastern trouble?"

"How still the evening is!" said Yarborough

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dreamily, passing by his question. "What were you gazing at so earnestly, son of mine, with that acolyte look in those dark eyes of yours?"

"That sparkle of the sea round the headland. I do like this place: I'd like to stop here always, instead of just running down from Saturday to Monday. But I want to hear about Carteret."

"You'll see it on the news-sheets to-morrow morning. Can you be up by six? I have to start early."

Justin's toss of the head evinced some natural scorn. "Up by six, indeed! I was up at five yesterday morning, weeding the rose-border."

"The deuce you were!" said the premier, amused. "What unfailing energy!"

"Don't swear, my lord," said Justin. He put up his young hand, slim and soft and brown, over the nervous thin fingers that lay on his shoulder. "It's the peaches that bother me so," he explained, "it seems no end of a pity to leave them behind. I've been trying to eat them all up before we go."

"A laudable ambition," said Yarborough drily, "but do not make yourself ill. I could not afford the expense of a funeral, and I shall have neither patience nor leisure for sick-nursing."

Justin laughed, but absently. "You *are* callous," he said, "and you haven't told me about Carteret."

"And if I were to tell you that Russia is occupying Merv, what good would it do you?"

Justin had got what he wanted; and he sat looking blankly into the premier's eyes, aghast and per-

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plexed. "Upon Merv—*oh!*" he gasped with increasing dismay: "but that means India!"

"Preceded by a European war," Yarborough suggested. "You paint in lurid colours, Just."

"It's what the newspapers have been prophe-sying for weeks. How they will cackle over it—beastly things!"

"Let me state the case in a nutshell," said Yarborough, blandly. "Russia has lent a handful of Cossacks to the Emir for the suppression of brigandage on the border."

"Is that what you are going to say in the House?"

"Certainly I shall say it, if any one should have the temerity to question me: which Savile probably will."

"They will think Russia has stolen another march upon us."

The premier smiled. "They are welcome to think what they please."

"And you are not going to explain?" Yarborough shook his head. "Oh, father, what a Sphinx you are! I don't wonder they get rather mad. I should think there'll be awful rows this session."

"I have never yet known a session without rows."

"'Twill be interesting," said Justin pensively. "I love to see them getting cross, you do annoy them so. They try so hard to get a handle against you, and you're always too clever for them."

The sight of so much invincible youthful gaiety and confidence brought a smile to Yarborough's lips. "Do you like rows, little fool?" he said. "So perhaps did I, before I learned wisdom and sorrow."

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"Why do you always talk as if you were as old as Methuselah? You're not so very old," Justin protested: "you're only fifty."

"Fifty years is a long time to look back on. Much may happen in fifty years to change and age a man who works hard."

"And you always did work hard, didn't you? I know, I know: and then those cads at St. Stephen's try and make out that you're living on a sinecure. Never mind! you just wait till *I* get into Parliament."

"You intend to adopt a political career, then? and pray how soon?"

"Of course I shall as soon as ever I— Listen! There's the bell for church. Aren't you coming?"

"Are you?"

Justin nodded. "I think perhaps you'd better," he said, wriggling off the balustrade. "Otherwise you'll go grubbing away at those beastly old blue-books of yours as soon as my back's turned. And you can look over my book. Have you got anything for the collection?" he pursued, dragging the premier along by a reluctant hand. "It wouldn't look nice for you to pass the bag, or put in a button. It might lose you the ecclesiastical vote."

Yarborough suffered himself to be led away unresisting: he never denied his son's requests, and might have been in a fair way to spoil him, if Justin had not possessed one of those happy natures which cannot be spoiled. But there was a shadow in Yarborough's eyes, as they walked together down the avenue, crushing under their feet a drift of sycamore leaves, while the sun shot his red and level

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rays over the russet and gold of the tall fronds of the bracken.

"Justin," he said at length, looking curiously down into the vivid young face, with its soft curves of undeveloped energy and undefined ambition, "what would you do if I were to die?"

Justin winced and turned white: he hung upon Yarborough's arm with lips apart and wide beseeching eyes, like some wounded animal fawning upon the hand that has struck it. "Oh, father, why?" he faltered.

"As a mere matter of curiosity. I have no particular intention of dying, but I like to witness your ingenuous regret."

"I should buy a black suit and a big hymn-book, and wear a band of crape round my hat, deep in proportion to the relief I felt at getting rid of you."

"And order a tombstone with a suitable inscription: 'Pro patria mortuus est'? or, 'Honesty is the best policy,' Yarborough rejoined, in no wise disconcerted, but replying to Justin's youthful cynicism with his own profound and bitter irony. "Thanks: and now let me have the truth."

Justin gave his father a sidelong, appealing glance: but obtaining no remission, he rendered obedience in the spirit of a Roman soldier. "I would try to vindicate your name," he said soberly.

"Good Heavens, what a singular ambition! And how would you set about cleansing that Augean stable?"

"At least I'd make them understand that you don't tell lies, or cheat, or swindle, or get a per-

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centage out of the army contracts, or gamble in joint-stock companies under the name of Smith."

"'Feathering my nest with the timbers of the ships of State,'" Yarborough quoted with his acid smile, "as one of the Irish members said at Birmingham the other day. If I feathered my nest with those timbers, I certainly didn't patch my roof with them: that old place will come tumbling about our ears one of these windy nights."

"I'll tell them about that: and I'll tell them about the time you were out of office, and how we used to have nothing but bread and butter for breakfast, and three slices of cold mutton for dinner, and how we didn't keep any servants except a grimy little slavey to do the housework, and old Forrest to drive the brougham, and Mornington because he said he was never going to leave you, and didn't care how long he waited for his wages. Oh, but I do think people are donkeys!" Justin cried out wrathfully. "As if anybody couldn't see by just looking at you that you weren't the sort of cad that tells lies and does things underhand!"

Yarborough turned his head away with the look of a man who receives an expected stab and finds it sharper than usual. "You believe in me, don't you?" he said, laying his hand caressingly on the soft dark hair. "You are very sure that I have never committed, nor ever could commit, any action which would not bear the fullest scrutiny of daylight?"

"You know I do!"

"Well, well," said the premier, sighing. "What

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a boy it is, after all! What a romantic, hot-headed, confiding little fool! Are you sure you're my son, Just? You're not much like your father."

"If I were a real proper kind of patriot, instead of a mere twentieth-century schoolboy, I know what I should do," Justin observed. They had left Chanston behind by now and were walking along a footpath through a wood: the silence was broken by the distant pealing of bells from their invisible bourn, and filled with the moan of the *Herbstwind* in the branches of the firs overhead.

"What would you do?" Yarborough inquired with a curiosity kept fresh by the fact that Justin's ideas were not, as a rule, easily guessed beforehand.

"Poison Mainwaring Savile."

"I confess that is hardly the answer I expected. What has Mr. Savile done to you?"

"Attacked you."

"Simple, but unconvincing. Don't you know that he risked his own reputation to serve under me, when I was first called to office?"

"Yes, and ratted at the first crisis. I know."

"Excuse me, you know nothing about it. We worked in splendid harmony till the cabinet was split by a Free-Trade eruption, when his principles forced him to secede, and we parted with mutual regret. Savile was a man worth commanding: in that he differed from the puling conscientious fools who profess to follow me to-day, and do follow me like dogs, when I have time to crack my whip at them," said the premier, with his peculiar virulent scorn.

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"Is that the kind of thing you say in the House?" Justin asked drily. "Because, if so, I don't so much wonder at your being unpopular, you know."

"I can't stoop to conciliate the mongrel puppies of my own party. I did it in the cursed days when I was young, and suffered the pangs of dependence: but I've lost the trick of it since."

"They are not mongrel puppies, really," Justin pleaded, unable to keep from laughing. "I don't wonder they yelp at you, when you're so intolerably rude to them: naturally they don't like it. You really are a very opinionated and arrogant Pasha, and if ever you get yourself assassinated by one of the men you've snubbed, *I* shall go and give evidence of provocation."

"I have a mind to box your ears for you," said Yarborough, grimly tolerant of his son's unfettered speech. "But to return: have you no other reason for hating Savile?"

"He's always so scrupulously fair, and gentlemanly, and impersonal. He fights you on every debate, and if ever you do get turned out it will be he that's done it, and yet somehow he never gets out of hand or loses his temper or puts himself one scrap in the wrong."

"Excellent reasons, I grant, for liking him: but since you say you hate him—?"

Justin fidgeted and was silent. Yarborough, who had spoken without after-thought, fixed an exceedingly keen glance upon him.

"Out with it!" he said: "since it appears you

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have a reason. I allow no secrets at Chanston except my own."

"His—his—"

"Go on."

"His marriage."

The hurried low utterance, wrung from Justin less by his father's imperious will than by his own conception of filial duty, was succeeded by a dead silence: anxiously looking up, he perceived himself forgotten. Yarborough's face was no longer the index of his temper: age, the practice of diplomacy, and the habit of domination had given to it a prevailing cast of arrogant calm: nevertheless Justin saw that he was strongly and strangely moved. He was reviewing the dark places of his own past, hearing inaudible voices, holding communion with the dead, or with those, worse than dead, who live and are estranged.

"Father!" Justin exclaimed, putting his own warm fingers into Yarborough's cold hand: "Father, don't! Did I hurt you?"

Yarborough started, and looked down at him with an awakened, recollecting glance. "Ah—it was you unlocked that door," he said. "Did I ever tell you that Savile's marriage touched me in any way?"

"No," said Justin, paling.

"You learned it from Mornington, I presume?"

Justin with difficulty got out an inarticulate assent.

"When next you wish to play the spy upon my secrets, let me recommend you not to apply to the

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servants. You have access to my keys, and could readily ransack my desk: such a method would be less public, and not more disgraceful."

Justin's head was bent low: this picture of the scarlet evening, the gold of bracken, the russet dampness of a woodland path, added a fourth to a series of similar paintings, locked up from daylight in the darkest cell of his memory. But when Yarborough had ended, he raised his head and looked up at his father with his great, dark, inflexible eyes.

"I beg your pardon," he said, managing his voice like a diplomat: and added less steadily, "I'm very sorry I hurt you, father."

Yarborough's expression changed: he put his hand under the soft chin, tilted back the reluctant face, and looked down critically into the unquelled eyes.

"You take punishment well," he said.

"I'm your son."

"You're my son, and the desire of mine eyes: true. But I have been in love with Margaret Savile all my life, and love her still, child: and old wounds will ache, when they are roughly handled."

"I'm sorry," Justin answered, still composed, though his lip quivered. Yarborough gave him a little pat on the cheek, as a cat slaps her kittens, hard enough for the olive skin to redden under the blow: then with the same tyrannical tenderness leaned over him and kissed him.

"What have I ever done, I wonder, that I should be a hero to this black-eyed child?" he said, with his far-off, melancholy smile. "There is the last

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bell beginning: let us walk faster, or we shall be late for church."

Nothing loath, Justin quickened his steps: but the tidal harmonies of the organ rolled out to meet them as they entered the porch. Yarborough followed Justin into the nearest pew, and sat down: and seated he remained while the rector and his scanty choir passed up the aisle, and the rest of the congregation rose in reverence. The church was spacious and old, and smelt of earthen coolness, the worshippers in the nave had no light beyond what streamed through the jewelled windows, enamelling pavement and pillar in a luminous vague design, like fire gleaming through still water, and flickering with branch-shadows. Justin knelt to pray and rose to sing, always with the pure uplifted look of a young acolyte before the altar: he sang like a nightingale, leaning on the full rich notes with no more of mortal weakness or weariness than an angel. When sermon-time came, he sat upright with his hands clasped, listening with his soul in his eyes. It is certain that Yarborough did not hear a word of the rector's excellent and practical homily: his eyes were fixed alternately on Justin's absorbed face and on the dark defaced hatchments of his forefathers, which hung over the arch of the chancel. RESURGAM: so ran, in dirty white lettering, the motto across the lozenge of the last master of Chanston. Was it a vaunt, or a prayer, or only a cry out of the deep? That question must remain unsolved till the Judgment-day, which in Yarborough's view was a date coincident with that of the Greek Kalends. And

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with a pang of mortal regret the old bitter conviction came upon him that by-and-by, be it soon or late, Justin too must commit his life, now in the very spring of its bloom, to the uncertainty of that enigmatic death which has taken so many lives and awaits every life that is left. In the sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection, Justin certainly would have no fear to die: the spirit-world was ever close to him, close as the world of peaches and bread - and - butter: but to Yarborough that hope was a hallucination, and the very light in his son's eyes was born only of the deceivableness of the spirit of man, which believes because it longs to believe. The hymn that followed the sermon chanced to be one of those in which an unimaginative congregation is required to express an earnest longing for that Death of which they are, probably without exception, most heartily afraid: and Yarborough, who had coolly kept his seat through the rest of the service, rose to join in singing "O Paradise! O Paradise!" with an expression of gleeful satire. Justin caught him in the act and frowned at him: but getting no satisfaction from the premier's cynical countenance, he turned resolutely away and devoted himself to his music.

They were among the last to leave the church, and found the best part of the congregation gathered in the churchyard, exchanging gossip and good-nights. Yarborough heard his own name pronounced once or twice as he passed through, unrecognised in the gathering darkness: to his surprise (for he had always been admired, if not exactly loved, in his own

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neighbourhood), it was spoken in no friendly tone. As they went out of the gate, he heard it uttered more distinctly, by the eldest of a group of men who drew aside to let them pass.

"Old Yarborough? Yes, he don't often show up in church: a reg'lar bad 'un, he is. He's feathered his nest pretty well, I lay. I seen it in the papers as how—"

The rest was inaudible, for Yarborough hurried on to escape it. Surprised, Justin looked up, and saw enough in the premier's face to make him slip his hand swiftly through his arm.

"Oh, the brutes! I do hate them," he cried, moved by that sudden heartache of sympathy which is so much sharper than any personal pang of wounded feeling. "Oh, father, you don't mind, do you? We know it's a lie!"

"I can manage fools, and knaves, and lords," Yarborough said, with rather more than his usual incisiveness of language: "which is as much as to say that I have the whip-hand of both Houses: but if the people desert me, son of mine, what shall I do? I have always had the people at my back. Now they say I shall be hooted to-morrow in the streets of London. Never mind!" He threw his arm suddenly round Justin's neck in endearment or caprice. "We have each other, have we not, little fighter? As long as I have you at my back, I dare say I can manage to keep the world in order."

XVII

HE COMMANDED PAYMENT TO BE MADE

“Have I done well? Speak, England! Whose sole sake
I still have laboured for, with disregard
To my own heart—for whom my youth was made
Barren, my manhood waste.”

PROVIDENCE had willed that Yarborough should pay the great price and receive the great, deceitful reward: withered leaves of perishable gold in exchange for a life of labour and renunciation. Perhaps he fared no worse than he deserved, for he was no hero, or at all events not consistently heroic: his motives and ideals were pure, but his methods were questionable, and sometimes even he fell away from his own standard, and mixed his gold with dross. He changed the prophet's hill-top vision for the restricted sight of the plain-dweller: then came confusion, mist of darkness, parting ways. In the end he had always fought his way back to light, but not without loss of a portion of his divine heritage of strength and sureness: in sin and suffering, in fall and rising again, he made his great human record and earned his earthly punishment, and yet perhaps was nearer to God at the end of it all than in those earlier, vainglorious days when he called himself *Ritter von dem heiligen Geist*.

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Thoughts of the past were spinning through Yarborough's brain as he leaned against the window of his private study on the third morning after his return to town, for once in his life idle. Every one in the house believed him to be at the Foreign Office, where it was his invariable habit to spend his mornings: but the Iron Premier, when he chose, or was forced, to break his rule, did not choose to admit even his son or his secretary into his confidence. Memorials of dead folk and things gone by spied at him from every corner, a cloud of witnesses: over the mantelpiece hung an oil-painting of his dead wife, looking patiently with faded eyes from her gilded frame, while close beside it hung a stormy, crayon head of Constant de Châtillon, who had fallen behind the barricades of Paris in the death-hour of his beloved Republic. Yarborough's wife, an unexceptionable woman, had died in the most unexceptionable way of diphtheria caught in an East End slum, to the infinite relief of her husband, who married her for her money, and treated her with a cruel indifference which probably weakened her desire to live. This he recognised, and did not repent: he could be detestably cruel when he chose, and in the present instance it pleased him to visit upon Emily Yarborough's unhappy fair head the fact, for she was in no way responsible, that he would rather have married another woman. Yarborough never looked at either of these portraits: the one bored him, while the other revived an old regret in all its keenness. Death had not the power to make him forget or forgive.

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Far more attractive to his eyes was the sketch in water-colours of Justin at the age of twelve, which confronted him on the opposite arch of the window. Lovely and delicate as one of Greuze's wistful children, the naïve young face nevertheless was not without a hint of sterner qualities, of power, originality, and sarcasm in the bud: it even suggested that Justin was already capable of analysing and deriding his own pretensions to the rôle of cherub. It was this queer look, half *espiègle* and half malicious, and wholly freakish and elusive, which sometimes made Yarborough wonder whether, after all, he would not have done better to trust the whole book of his life to his son's reading. Justin was young, but he was versed in statecraft: he had grown up from babyhood under the shadow of his father's greatness, and was the unabashed repository of plans for which rival statesmen intrigued across whispering continents. To him, Yarborough sometimes fancied, the story of that great, lonely, degraded life might have been told, as to God, if any God had been discoverable in the wide dark of the universe: told with simplicity and without excuse, in a confidence begotten of love and justice. But Yarborough's heart gave way, and the words were never spoken: the long deceit went on from year to year, while Yarborough, looking for Death to come sooner than the reckoning day of revelation, sunned himself in the light of Justin's innocent worship, and thrust away fear. No exquisite dread nightly recurrent, no perception of the unspannable gulf that lies between confession and detection, no

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pity even for Justin's solitary despair when the truth should become plain to him after his father's death, availed to make Yarborough relax his grasp of what he held. He would not risk one atom of Justin's love and faith to secure their eternity.

Turning from the painting, his glance fell on the street, overcast with rainy light and swart clear shadow. Northward the trees of the park tossed their russet branches flecked with yellow: southward the City poured its ceaseless cavalcade along Whitehall. Right before him rose the long fabric of the Foreign Office, teeming with great dreams and deeds behind the sedate gloom of citizen-aspect: this was his peculiar realm, and here his vast and intricate capacities had room to work out their own ambitions. Under every administration the Foreign Office plays the part of a Sibyl: under Yarborough it had become a veritable Sphinx. The old arrogant fire lit up his pale face as he looked at it: they might accuse him of selling his country and gambling in stocks, but at least they could not deny that the land throve by such treachery, and that England had never been better hated or better feared abroad. The fact that at the present moment they did most vehemently deny it, and that the whole city was agitating itself to fury over the dumbness of its premier under the slights recently put upon English prestige, did not trouble Yarborough at all. True, the news had on the previous day been officially announced that the murder of an English envoy had been followed by the occupation of a disputed Afghan city by a European

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power: but what was that to Yarborough, who was convinced that within twenty-four hours he would have reversed the position of affairs, and turned the pretext of temporary concession to a neighbour in distress, originally designed to mask an attack, into one strenuously put forward to cover the shame of retreat? These were trifles, not worth the trouble of an explanation: and probably Yarborough would not have condescended to explain them, even if it had not been the case that publicity, by wounding the *amour-propre* of his secretive enemy, might jeopardize the success of his diplomacy. England stable, prosperous, honoured: such were the actual fruits of Yarborough's great imperium.

In the City black looks were seen, angry voices were audible: and the remarkable thing about these demonstrations was that they were not individual or spasmodic, but collective and continuous: not worked upon by street orators, but the outcome of a general feeling of ill-will, suspicion, and fear. The police apparently smelt danger in the air, for their blue coats were visible at every turning: and when two of their number met, they exchanged rapid glances of question, curiously significant in these prosaic reincarnations of the old Roman legionaries. But no rumour of this unrest disturbed the official calm of the street beneath Yarborough's windows: it kept its vigils under the cloudy pallor of the sky with every appearance of being asleep.

The hall door opened and closed, and Carteret came out and turned down towards Whitehall. He had abandoned his editorial duties to become Yar-

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borough's private secretary, and the Tory papers had not yet done with wrangling over his motives. He was almost an old man now, gray-haired, very slight, somewhat bent; but the change was purely external, and his attitude towards Yarborough had never altered. He was still given to bantering his august chief, and was one of the really few men whom Yarborough in his most despotic moods could not terrify. He too believed Yarborough to be, as his custom was, hard at work across the way. The premier looked after him with a smile: he was fond of Carteret, who knew him to be a scoundrel, yet served him for love.

There was another who, long ago, had served him for love, and whose memory and his very name had been obliterated from Yarborough's thoughts more than twenty years since. The premier's memory of his brother was neither forgotten nor outworn, but it had been thrust aside and chained down by the vigour of his will. An idle hour, a breath of autumn, a chance resemblance in the street, recalled to Yarborough's thoughts the face of Edmund Yarborough, who had said that he would return one day, before the coming of the end. A chance resemblance, or rather a striking and haunting likeness amid diversity, Yarborough thought, fixing his eyes upon the figure of a man who was walking languidly along the rain-streaked pavement. The likeness lay in the delicate, whimsically irregular features, in the slender patrician form, in the elegant dress with its touch of Bohemian freakishness: the dissimilarity was confined to the dead

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whiteness of his thick soft hair, and to a peculiarity of expression, so marked and strange that it almost overpowered the more tangible points of resemblance, and made Yarborough ready to swear that none at all existed. The stranger had the look of a man who has passed through torment and has emerged from it insensible of lesser pains. Swinging a light cane between his fingers, he sauntered up to the door of Yarborough's house and rang. Yarborough leaned against the window-frame, and listened. A moment later the door opened, and he heard the indistinguishable murmur of Mornington's discreet voice. Then there floated up to Yarborough's ears the clear, flexible, slightly Italianate tones of the stranger's reply.

"Ah, how d' you do, Mornington: can I see Mr. Christian for a few minutes?"

Yarborough stood motionless, his hands clasped, suffocating for breath: he could neither speak nor stir. He heard the murmur of voices below, and guessed indistinctly that Mornington would say he was not at home, but he was incapable of protest: his lips were vivid, his features strained. Intense physical pain will have its way, however strong the resisting will: and Yarborough, who had been struggling all day against its attack, was for the moment at its mercy. When he recovered himself, the interview was over, and Edmund Yarborough was languidly strolling away in the direction of Whitehall. A singular rush of tenderness came over Yarborough; he leaned out of the window, following with his eyes that figure, so youthful and so grace-

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ful, endeared to him by a thousand memories of their common childhood. He called softly after him, "Edmund!" but his voice was not well under command, and Edmund went on his way. A moment later, as Yarborough was about to call again, the house-door was flung wide, and Justin ran out on the pavement. He looked up and down the street, caught sight of Edmund, and flew after him. His method of making himself known was to run up to Edmund, slip a hand through his arm, and cry, lifting his beseeching, sparkling eyes, "Oh, do come back! He says you're father's brother, and I know all about you, and you *are* to come, because father wants you!"

Yarborough recoiled from the window as if an asp had stung him. They were together, the man who knew his secret and the child who was never to know it: and things had so fallen out that he had not had time to warn Edmund of the danger. Most men are superstitious, but Yarborough had always held himself scornfully free of such weakness; now for the first time the blood of the heirs of Chanston, born dreamers and symbolists, ran cold through his veins. Nothing would have been easier than to go down and separate them, and impose silence by a word, or even a glance, upon Edmund's rapid wits: and yet this easy thing was precisely what he could not do. His mind said, "The chances are a thousand to one against such a chance betrayal, therefore do nothing, or you may betray yourself." His deeper self cried, less sophistically, "The doom is come upon you, and cannot be intercepted, therefore do noth-

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ing, but submit to it with what quietude you may." He sat down to wait, inert, quiescent: the cloudy light streamed across the figure of an old man huddled in his chair. Meanwhile time flew, and the clock ticked through seconds and minutes to the customary hour of Yarborough's return from the Foreign Office. Still no sign came from below. At last, when half an hour more of Time's irretrievable sands had ebbed away, there came a step on the stair: a soft, hesitating step, as far removed from Edmund's graceful tread as from Justin's flying footfalls. Then a hand shook the door, and, finding it unlocked, opened it: and Justin appeared on the threshold. No words passed between them, for none were needed: to the inquisition of those supplicating eyes Yarborough's dark glance gave up his very soul in answer. All that he had ever made of himself lay bare to Justin's gaze: and he had no excuse: for no lie, no trick, no meanness worse than crime in his past life was comparable with the guilt of deceit practised so long upon Justin's innocence. This was the unpardonable sin which could not be forgiven.

Justin spoke first, coming into the room and closing the door behind him; he was not old enough, nor sufficiently mature in suffering, to take the whole truth for granted, as Yarborough would have preferred to do: it seemed as if it could not be all true, and he felt that he must have it down in black and white.

"Did you know Sir Edmund Yarborough was here?" he asked.

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"I knew."

"He has been telling me how you stole the treaty—I mean—" Justin flinched visibly, but Yarborough made no sign—"well, I suppose it was just that. You did really sell it?"

"I did really steal it and send it to the papers."

"And you put the blame on him."

"Precisely."

"And you never told me."

"No, I never told you, and I never would have told you. You are my son: have I not the right to lie to you, if I choose?"

Yarborough was the better for this flash of the old arrogant and perverted ethics: he rose to his feet and stood looking down at Justin, like some iniquitous god arraigned by his devotee. "You're only a child," he continued, "you can't understand such things."

"Perhaps not: only I thought you were fond of me."

Yarborough silently held out his arms: but Justin stepped back.

"I can't, I can't," he cried. "Oh, I wish so I had never found out!"

"Justin!" Yarborough's hands fell on his shoulders. "Come to me this instant, I command you! I'll not let you escape me like this. What! the moment it pleases you you are to dance off and take up your abode with some infernal parson, I suppose? I thought duty to parents was a part of the Catechism."

"I'd nurse you, if you were ill."

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“Ma foi! as Edmund used to swear, that’s edifying. You’d nurse me if I were ill, would you? Well, then, I am ill: sick enough for you to exercise your charity upon me, and practise that inestimable religion of yours, which teaches you to count your own virtues in powers of the nth, and your neighbour’s in fractions. Now will you nurse me, since I tell you that I am ill?”

“Father, father, don’t!” Justin cried. He shrank back and put up his hands over his eyes, not to hide tears, for this was a trouble past weeping over, but to shut out the sight of the face he loved best in the world, defeatured and estranged by passion. “Father, don’t!” again he pleaded, and Yarborough let him go and leaned against the window, conscious that this was not the best way to plead his cause.

“What shall I say to you, Just?” he asked, with his old look full of sweetness and irony. “There’s no critic so unrelenting as a child, otherwise I might remind you that there are sometimes excuses to be found, even for the contemptible among sinners. I might say, for example, that the throne I bought so dear has not been, as you very well know, precisely an agreeable seat: or that—”

“No, don’t. Don’t say anything,” Justin intervened. “It isn’t any good, because I can’t believe a word you say: you’ve told me so many things that weren’t true. Even just now you said you were ill: and how can you be ill? You were quite well this morning. You’ve humbugged me so often.”

“Whom should I humbug if not you, little rebel?”

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Justin shook his head. "You ought not to have cheated me into loving you: you ought to have told me."

"Ought I? I liked your love so much: it was such a fresh, pure, innocent thing. It came to my hand like a wild dove out of the woods, and who was I to clip its wings?"

"I think I could have borne everything, if only you would have trusted me. But you heard me say how good you were, you let me abuse the other people, you *liked* to hear me abuse them—you know you did!—you knew I thought you were the best man in the world—why, it's just all my whole life that has gone to pieces," Justin said, his lip quivering. "Oh, and to think of last Sunday evening, when we went to church together! But even then, you did laugh in the hymn."

Yarborough laughed afresh, but with an altered accent, at this flight of inconsequent logic, which betrayed the child under Justin's fifteen years. "I did laugh in the hymn," he said. "I am not a good man, Justin: let us concede that, and see what comes of it. You are still my son."

"No."

"No! my young eaglet, how do you manage that? Whose son are you, if not mine?"

"I'm your son in the sense of being your slave, but then even the slaves were free inside. You can't make me love you, you know."

"Can't I? But you are veritably my son all the same, and never more so than now, you child with the inflexible eyes! Was yours the kind of affec-

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tion which can't exist unless it be founded on esteem?"

"I was fond of you, I did honour you," Justin said, lifting his fearless, candid eyes. "I think I have plenty of you in me. I know it—it hurts very much to say things to you like what have got to be said. I'm going away."

"You are not."

"I'll stop if you'll do one thing," Justin declared. He stood up, facing his father, not in the least afraid of Yarborough's menacing eyes. "Listen to me, father, for I'll never say this twice. I do love you: I could forgive you everything, if I could believe you were truly fond enough of me to do as I ask you in one thing only. It was wicked, what you did, and if I stopped with you it would always be coming between us, and I should remember, and remember, till I came to hate you. Will you do one thing for me?"

"Let us hear what it is."

"Only to tell about the treaty."

"You want a public confession?"

"I want Sir Edmund to be set right, and I don't see any other way."

"In plain words, you expect me to give up the premiership for you? Good Lord, the self-sufficiency of these children!"

"You won't do it?"

"Patriotism forbids, little dreamer. If I did, we should be in the thick of a European war within twenty-four hours."

"I don't think people ought to be patriotic at

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somebody else's expense," said Justin, in a low voice: and Yarborough laughed again.

"What a Puritan child it is, this little son of mine!" he said, touching Justin's cheek with his finger-tips: but Justin drew away from the caress, and Yarborough's hand fell.

"Good-bye, then," Justin said, with a long, soft sigh. "I'm going away."

"You are not of age, I believe?"

"Don't, please, try to keep me: I could not live with you, I should run away sooner or later. I'm fifteen: I can work."

"In the great world? It's a hard master, Justin."

"I hope so; I've been spoiled long enough. I'll write to you by-and-by, when I've got something to do."

"Justin, do you mean this?"

"Yes, father."

"You are going away?"

"Yes, father."

"You are going to leave me alone—now?"

"You'll have the premiership, and you like that better than me."

"My God!" said Yarborough, clenching his hands—"my God, what a way to exact payment! Ah, but there is no God: we have only this one life, and mine so nearly at an end—!"

Justin threw his arms suddenly round Yarborough's neck and clung to him, laying down his head on Yarborough's shoulder: once more Yarborough felt the warm young heart beating close against his own, and he thought his son had come

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back to him, till he heard the inexorable pleading voice whisper in his ear, "O father, father, can't you give it up?"

Yarborough pushed him away with such violence that Justin could hardly keep his feet. "It's all of a piece with the rest," he said, his voice shaken. "You'll go with the others, with Margaret and Edmund and all that ever I loved: and I'll go to the work I was made for, through the last watch of the night. There, don't tempt me with your damnable pretty, coaxing ways. I don't want to hear another word. Go!"

He pointed to the door: and Justin, taking him at his word, went quietly out. But he was no sooner gone than terror fell upon Yarborough: he listened intently, and heard the soft steps going away from him down the stairs. He ran to the door and opened it. "Justin!" he cried, "come here, come back! I want you, child!"

There was no reply. Then the whole world became unreal to Yarborough. A poignant sense of loss and finality came upon him, and he felt that he had looked his last on Justin's face in this life. His was that craving for one word more, one last brightness of the eyes, which tortures those who watch by the newly dead. "Justin, come back to me!" he cried, and then, sinking against the balustrade, in a voice thick with faintness, and sharp with mortal pain, "O God! Justin, come to me. I'm dying!" But that cry also received no answer, except the distant closing of the street-door behind Justin's departing figure.

XVIII

TO THE UTTERMOST FARTHING

“The depth and dream of my desire,
The bitter paths wherein I stray,
Thou knowest, who hast made the fire,
Thou knowest, who hast made the clay.”

AN hour later, Yarborough was still standing by the open window, looking down into the street, empty and roofed with gray rainless cloud. The east wind blew up the street, and set the grimy dust whirling: fragments of dirty paper, torn fruit-skins, the orts and refuse of London life swirled and tossed in its eddying currents, or drifted into the wet gutter and were lost in its gray and impure tide. Yarborough thrust his hands deep into his pockets, and stood looking out, finding some obscure nerve of sympathy touched by the gloomy afternoon. A sudden spate of rain blew in his face, and wetted his dark hair: stubborn alike to the wind's malice and the ill-will of man, he stood coolly facing the dreary city, which from far away hummed with mutiny. He heard that singular murmur, like a battle-cry in his ears.

To Edmund, coming in with his velvet tread, there was little likeness to be traced between the handsome, wilful boy of more than twenty years since, and the commanding figure of the premier,

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with his sombre head, marked by pride, haggard with pain, and scarred by a life of strong antagonisms. But when he spoke, and Yarborough turned towards him, those twenty years seemed to fall away like a shadow in the sun. Bred in the habit of tenacious and silent affection, they met literally as if they had parted yesterday; they touched hands, and that was all: there were no cleavages of thought to bridge over, no ravelled ends of feeling to knit up.

"How you must wish I had never come back, Ian!" said Edmund, using the old childish pet-name with his wistful, humorous smile: and Yarborough's brow cleared as he listened.

"I like that: it's good to hear the old name again. What fun we used to have when you and I were boys together, Eddy!"

"Ah, those old days have gone for good—or for bad. I was the confidant of your early ambitions: do you remember?"

"Good heavens, yes!" Yarborough exclaimed, with his peculiar bitterness of tone, "in the days when I thought it would be amusing to be premier."

"And is it not so very amusing?"

"No, the fable was reversed: the grapes were sweet enough till I came to eat them."

"Mon ami, you are of an exacting and dissatisfied spirit, and nothing will content your vanity but to throw the blame on fate. Why do you not take example by myself? No one could say that I have lived a prosperous life, and yet I protest I have enjoyed every moment of it."

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Yarborough had the grace to be abashed by this uncomplaining courage: nor was it the first time that Edmund had made him ashamed of himself.

"You're tired, sit down," he said, wheeling forward the only cushioned arm-chair in the room, and pushing Edmund into it, as if it were a delight to him to do little services for a superior. "How white your hair is, Eddy! I saw you in the street, and did not know you, it has changed you so."

"I should have known you anywhere, at a glance: you've not changed, only hardened and strengthened. And your hair is dark still, it is not even gray."

"In the Personal columns they say I dye it."

"And do you?" Edmund laughed in Yarborough's ireful face. "Never mind; I can even conceive that you might dye your hair, but always with a patriotic object."

"Have the goodness to show a little respect to me, will you?" said Yarborough. "It is good to see you. Where have you been?"

"Paris, Athens, Byzantium, Teheran: and you?"

"Further than you: I have lived in London."

"Which is, by-the-by, in a very sad humour with you. What is all this I hear about an impending invasion of India?"

"Oh, we're in the breakers, as usual: steering through diplomatic surf within a few inches of shipwreck. We shall be over the reef in a few hours, with a stretch of smooth water before us, and so I've told them: but they won't take my word for it."

"They would perhaps prefer a glance at the

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chart," Edmund said drily. "Why do you not give them what they want?"

"What, *I* explain myself to that clamouring, thick-skulled rabble? You should know me better. Besides, it might be dangerous."

Edmund leaned back, laughing quietly and unrestrainedly. "I think you said you were unpopular?" he remarked.

"You think I deserve it? Good: and so I do." Yarborough turned his head away; his voice dropped involuntarily to a lower tone, to a vibration of uncontrollable suffering. "But not from them: not from these people. I *did* love, I *have* served them: and for my pains I am made the subject of hits in topical songs at music-halls, and everybody cheers. I have been the victim of certain popular demonstrations in the streets, which made me wonder whether, at the last, I should even be allowed to die in my bed. And I've given up everything for them: I've given up—Justin—"

He broke off, Edmund watching him quietly: both shrank from the explanation that was to come, which Yarborough had so far held at bay. He went on after a perceptible pause, which gave him time to crush down the resilience of pain.

"You heard of my marriage?" Edmund bent his head. "My wife was a woman of no individuality, but she performed her duty in two ways remarkably well: she bore me a son, and died. I cannot tell which was the greater relief to me, at the time. Soon, however, I discovered that her death was a quite insignificant benefit compared with Justin's

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birth. He was mine." Again Yarborough paused, and signed with his hand to Justin's portrait. "There was nothing of his mother in him. He was mine: my very son: flesh of my flesh, bone of my bone, spirit of my spirit. And, strangest of all, he loved me."

"The past tense, Ian?"

Yarborough turned away his face towards the gray street and the rainy eastern wind. "It appears that he has left off loving me," he said.

"It was my fault, I suppose," said Edmund, after a minute. "And yet it was not my fault at all. It was partly your own, for teaching him to believe that he understood you when he did not know so much as his A B C: and partly it was a cursed little trick of luck. His cry was, that he knew all about the treaty, and that you told him everything. And I—I asked him if you had ever regretted the part you played: and that was the way it began."

"There must have been many riddles in his mind which leaped up to acclaim your solution," Yarborough said, with a cynical smile. "I'm not keen on the details of that colloquy, Edmund: keep them to yourself."

"And so I am made the instrument of sending upon you the one thing more than you could bear?"

Yarborough turned upon him, his face a flash of fire, and brought down his slender, white hand clenched upon the table. "I defy God to send upon me more than I can bear."

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"Be it said in a good moment!" Edmund exclaimed. He was superstitious to the backbone, and made a furtive movement to cross himself. "Ian, for Heaven's sake! do you want to be taken at your word?"

Yarborough laughed in his face. "What is to happen, will happen; that is what I felt when I saw you and Justin together. I thought of that tyrannous old Greek, who saw his sins visited upon his head in his old age." He stretched out his hands with a strange, pathetic gesture. "All things became unstable, wavering and falling away like water under my grasp."

"You are famous, however," Edmund observed.

"What a perfectly banal consolation! Do you imagine that I would give the toss of a bad farthing to lie in Westminster Abbey, with a pile of intensely ugly parti-coloured marbles over my tired and decomposing corpse? No: if you've got to lie cramped in a coffin, with your eyes shut and your jaw bound up, what's the odds between the Abbey and a pauper funeral? Personally I should prefer the latter, for the sake of Mallinson and his revenues."

"You will leave Justin a great inheritance."

"Consisting of a hundred a year in Consols, plus the handicap of a tarnished name. Your respectable suburban citizen would not take a son of old Yarborough for his stable-boy."

"Dear fellow, you are too absurd! You do not surely expect me to credit all this rhodomontade?"

"I never expect any man to believe the truth: but it's true, all the same. Mind, I don't say

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they're not afraid of me: but that's a different question. It is an excellent thing for Justin to have cast me off; it is unlucky that he has ever called me father. He had better have been a bastard than my son."

"Do you think so? Now I, for one, am positive there will be a reaction after your death. Nothing so sentimental as your good citizen! give him but the pretext of a funeral, and he will weep over a gallows-bird."

"On the contrary, as soon as I am dead I shall be execrated by every honest householder in the Empire."

"Ah ça! I do not believe that. Why?"

Yarborough crossed to his writing-table, drew out a deep drawer, and took from it a small coffer of solid iron, fitted with a massive patent lock. He unlocked it with a key which hung at his watch-chain, and took out a duodecimo volume bound in leather, so thick as to fill the depth of its case. He carried it to Edmund's side, set it on the table, and ran his fingers through the pages, which were covered with his own strong, black, and tiny writing, and irregularly spaced for days, and months, and years.

"The history of my life," he said, letting it drop again. "I began to keep that record the night you left England."

Edmund looked up mutely, fascinated by that singular journal, but as yet understanding nothing of its purpose, or of its bearing on his own fortunes. Yarborough smiled at him.

"It's all down in black and white," he said:

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"every trick, every cheat, every lie: the story of the treaty, with your share in it and mine, set down in detail. I had meant to leave it in Justin's hands: an agreeable legacy for a father to leave to a sensitive, romantic, idolatrous little son—you agree with me? But death covers more sins than charity, and I hoped he would take the good with the bad, and love me in spite of all. But that is over, and I have had to find a new editor. I have just despatched a letter to Savile asking him to undertake the task."

"To Savile?" Edmund repeated. "My dear child, are you—are you *sane*? Why Savile?"

"He has the necessary diplomatic knowledge, for one thing: it's a delicate matter, you see. He'll know where the asterisks ought to come in."

"But—you will give that book to Savile? You will give him your confidence?"

"I like Savile," Yarborough declared coolly. "And he likes me. We swear at each other in public—" ("Oh, I trust not!" Edmund interjected) —"but that's beside the mark. You could not do it, you would spend your life in whitewashing my character and refining upon my phrases. Savile's a man of inflexible justice, a man after my own heart: he'll do it as I'd have it done. And if he needs help, his wife will help him: I've directed him to put my letter straight into her hands, if he wants any further exposition of my motives. So your name will be cleared at last."

"But not till you are dead: and what good will that do to me?"

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Yarborough let fall upon Edmund's face one of his profound and piercing glances. "Perhaps it will not do much good," he said. "You are one of the men who love me, Eddy."

"How charming of you to be surprised! I think it is twenty years and more since I gave up all, and followed you?"

"Well," said Yarborough, irresolutely. He ruffled the leaves of the great book, and let them fall again, sighing: the blank pages at the end were few in number. "It will puzzle the historians," he said. "I have extenuated nothing, nor set down aught in malice: I am written down a mean scamp on every page: yet neither would I gloze over my virtues, such as they are, for modesty's sake. And I have some virtues — great ones, too, egoist that I am! Well, it's all there: a man's soul, stripped of shams, with not a rag of vanity to drape its deformities. God send them joy of their dissection! Does it come too late to please you, Eddy? You're still young."

An indefinable chill of fear came suddenly over Edmund: he looked up quickly. "But you are not dead yet, I believe," he said.

"Not yet: but see, there are not many blank leaves in the book, are there?"

"You will have to bind some in," said Edmund.

"I think not."

Edmund got up, threw the book on the table, and laid his hands on his brother's shoulders. "I knew it, I was sure of it," he said. "You have said a great deal about yourself, and yet told me very little I did not know before: you have taken all for granted,

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passed over all as if it were of no consequence. You have something to tell me: what is it?"

"Nothing of any consequence."

"Ian, tell me!"

"Well, then, I'm dying."

"Dying!" Edmund echoed; and again, as if he hardly understood, "*Dying?*"

"I'm afraid so: unlucky, isn't it?"

"Unlucky!" Edmund exclaimed, as if he could not get beyond Yarborough's bare words: and suddenly he broke into a laugh. "Ma foi, you're right: I avow I'm sorry."

"I'm dying of angina," Yarborough coolly resumed. "Painful?—why, yes: it generally is. The attacks recur pretty frequently of late. I had one this morning."

The absolute indifference of his tone had upon Edmund the effect of some frightful dream, from which he struggled to awake, and could not. "But, Christian, what madness!" he gasped. "You are up—busy, working—have you seen a doctor?"

"Two: the second only a week ago. They prescribed absolute rest and freedom from excitement," Yarborough said, his tone pregnant with irony. "You will perceive that the prescription might have been easier to follow."

"And you went on working? Christian! why, it's madness. You're throwing your life away."

"No: I am laying it out at good interest."

"How long did they give you?"

"The first was prepared to cure me, or as good as cure me, if I put myself unreservedly into his hands:

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that was a year ago, in the thick of the Tariff Session. The second gave me a few weeks, perhaps a few months—perhaps a few hours.”

“Then you might die at this moment?”

“Probably I should have to go through some sort of preface of agony.”

“So bad as that?”

“Rather like knives turning in one’s breast. Don’t faint, Eddy.”

Edmund was not far off it, but he recovered himself and kept strong control of his face and voice, anxious only not to distress Yarborough. He could not be satisfied, however, without putting him through a brief medical cross-examination, the issue of which left little room for hope.

“So near to the next world!” he said, steadying his voice with an effort. “How does it look to you, Ian—that room beyond?”

“Blank, as it always did. What says the wise man? ‘There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest’—whither I must go very soon.”

“You never were afraid of death.”

“And am not now. No! the nearer I come to it, the less I fear it: the more keenly I yearn for it, as for my appointed day of release. Oh! mine has been a fool of a life, Edmund. I shall be glad to be quit of it.”

“Does Justin know of this?”

“Not a word: why should I trouble him?”

Edmund shook his head. “It’s madness: you’ll break the boy’s heart,” he said.

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"His heart? No, for I never had it. He was fond of me and respected me," Yarborough answered, with an indescribable accent of irony. "He never loved me. He is a religious youth, however, and will be publicly shocked by my death: privately he will look upon it as a blend of the righteous judgment and the happy release." Yarborough paused, then went on with a sudden and total alteration of manner. "Look at the clock! I must be at the House in a couple of hours. Edmund, do one thing more for me!"

"You know I will," said Edmund. "What is it?"

"Play to me, the way you used at Chanston, when we were boys together. Do you remember those endless improvisations with the wind's voice wailing through their recurrent melodies? You had always a master-hand on the piano. I'll lie down here on the sofa and listen, and forget everything in the world except that I've got you back again."

Under the gray sky the gray clouds whirled through the wind's cold fingers: the rain beat upon the casement, the clock ticked softly through the sombre afternoon. Edmund sat at the piano, playing without a break: from his fingers flowed sombre harmonies, broken chords, fragments of the song of dead lovers: stormy cries of battle, the clarion-call of ambition, the lust of fighting, and the clangour of arms: then the deep jarring thunder of a death-march, and at the close of all the low lament for the dead.

XIX

“FATHER, I HAVE SINNED ”

“A boy’s will is the wind’s will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts.”

WHEN Justin made his exit from the premier’s official residence and cast himself adrift upon the world, he was quite without a plan or a purpose. Nothing could have been more artless than his flight, a fact of which he became dimly aware when he sat down under a tree in St. James’s Park to count the coins in his purse, and found that they amounted to the sum total of threepence and a halfpenny stamp. A piece of string, a stick of chocolate, a handkerchief besmeared with paint and a tattered pocket-edition of *Stretton* constituted the remainder of his available assets; and Justin had far too much good sense not to be aghast at his predicament. The brief autumn evening was already darkening towards night, and in all that great city he had neither a lodging nor a friend: every door was shut against the outcast, the premier’s son. There came into his mind a little mournful wonder that his father should have let him go so readily: but in spite of all he was thankful to have escaped, and would have died sooner than go back to the great gloomy house, about whose walls the taint of treachery and

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of hypocrisy clung like the infection of some deadly plague. Here he might starve, but at least he could breathe freely; by exile he had won liberty of mind.

Healthy children live by faith. Justin had shot up with the quiet growth of a plant or a bird, confiding not to-morrow only, but the mysteries of to-day and yesterday, to the wisdom of his father's keeping. He knew that Yarborough was unpopular, and yet he had never found himself forced to admit that either he or the people who hated him must be in fault. His father was the best man in the world, but the world also was very good; there was a misunderstanding, nothing more. Some day, according to Justin's favourite dream, the premier was to be righted before the eyes of the world by his son's explanation; the details of that splendid apology were left a little vague, but the result stood out clear, like the bow in the cloud. Now, all was changed, confused: there was no open vision, the boy's faith served him no longer; in his own strength he must, by thought and reasoning and judgment, win for himself place and light amid darkness and storm. Solitary among millions, he was glad of his isolation, glad of the evening, and of the high south wind that beat across the Park. He looked up into the gray sky, where the great clouds seemed to fly unresting, like so many homing birds; the whole of that vast movement overhead was informed by barren labour, working for no visible end. The trees, too, dropping their damp leaves at his feet, were content to labour and perish without fruit; the whole tangible universe, so far as he could apprehend,

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it, was but an imperfect instrument, full of errors, failures, crimes, incomplete, not wholly doing its Creator's will, not always reaching to the height even of His purpose; lacking beauty, dashed with cruelty, yet allowed by the Master-Craftsman because, after so many thousand beaten years, it still continued to work and not to faint. The stars, appointed to be seats of archangels, must fade and burn away; everywhere death waits on life, achievement is no sooner gained than it passes into ruin, and yet the last word is victory. Earth is not corrupted by her evil, but sanctified by her good. Soothed by the strong morality of nature, Justin sat dreaming with his face turned to the wind; the wind, making in a grand and idle obedience towards some dim, unknown bourne. Where was the good of it all? Justin asked himself. Where was the good of a wrecking wind at sea? Yet the winds are Heaven's ministers. So, might not men also be ministers of Heaven, if, though fallen, they continued to work and not to faint? Yarborough had fallen, but not ignobly; he had sinned, but not for gain. Was the tired worker never to be forgiven?

Then, like a tide returning, came the memory of the sin by which Yarborough's life was still enthralled. Edmund was not yet cleared, and Yarborough lied daily. He was premier, living not so very uncomfortably upon stolen money; he possessed a kind of fame, extorted a kind of joy out of the battle. All these gains must be renounced, before pardon could be won. Confession and reparation

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must come first, public confession, public atonement. Energy awoke in Justin; he locked his hands together, and looked up at the stars, which began to show themselves in blue windows of the clouds. When one is only fifteen, and possesses a full measure of the three cardinal virtues, it seems an easy matter to unmake and remake a life, to retrieve the mistakes and wipe out the sins of sixty misspent years. Justin felt as if nothing could be simpler than to persuade his father to write, say, a letter to the *Times*, vindicating Edmund, and setting forward his own share in that scandal of twenty years ago. With a child's divine clear-sightedness, he pierced and flung aside the casuistry of common-sense; reaching forward to eternity and God, he could afford to disregard the verdict of the morning papers. Doubtless YARBOROUGH also would soon learn, perhaps had already learned, to distinguish between the finite which must pass away, and the infinite which alone truly exists. How easy to repent, how beautiful to perform the acts of repentance, in comparison with the torment of estrangement from heaven and from Justin! What was to come afterwards, Justin left a blank; the right course, once found, must be taken, and unimportant practical details must be left to shift for themselves. His *naïf*, innocent logic allowed no middle way.

Justin's vigil had lasted so long that it was now quite dark, and the autumn evening had closed in cloudy and wild. He got up, and walked slowly out of the park, still considering his own conduct

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with a clear-eyed intensity peculiar to the very young, whose purity of ideal has never had to ally itself with compromise. Love for his father was beginning to spring up like a plant bruised, but not broken; but with his love mingled indignation and stern scorn and grief. Himself the very soul of candour, and incapable of a lie, he could not forget that his father had deceived him. The first despairing hatred was over, over too was the first wild passion of flight; he was going home, but in the spirit of a judge. Things could never be as they had been—or, at least, not for a very long while. He came into the familiar street, and looked up at the familiar house, all shuttered and dark; not a light burned in any of the windows except one, and that he knew to be his father's private study. Through the cracks in the shutters he saw the dim shining of a candle, which burned there all night long. The house had a ghostly look, the street was very still. Justin felt such a rush of love and longing go over his heart as brought the tears to his eyes. He had parted from his father in anger for the first time in his life, and he had meant to come back in judgment, but he could not do it; nothing but love and pity filled his heart, and a childish longing to kiss and make up the quarrel, to lay his cheek against his father's, and tell him that nothing mattered. He came up to the step, and lifted his hand to the bell, and suddenly, quick and strong, came the knowledge that he could not go in. He could not come to his father's side, nor be folded in his father's arms, because so to return would

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be to lose his only hold over Yarborough's actions. Once he had got his son again, Justin could not think that Yarborough would ever be induced to make amends to his son's God, in whom he did not believe. Justin never dreamed of disobeying. He went away without a murmur, without one backward glance. The spoiled child wanted his warm nest, the loving heart ached for memory of the premier's desolate hearth, pride and anger were purged away, and he was ready with an infinite multitude of excuses to cover up the sin against men, but the sin against Heaven remained, and could not be excused. For men Yarborough had done good work, and if he had fallen, he had also laboured and suffered; but God exacts a purer service, accepting sacrifice only from innocent hands. In His eyes, the temple of Yarborough's life was built upon the sand, and it lay with Justin to supply a new foundation. He came out into the full bright tide of the godless city, miscalled Christian. Whitehall was light as day, and noisy as an orchestra; lamps shone out, carriages swept by, faces flashed upon him and were gone, and over all the great night brooded, and the wild wind fled continually north. He heard Big Ben striking eight, and suddenly found himself to be exceedingly hungry, for he was a person who liked to eat at regular hours. Four meals a day left him frequently ravenous, and now he had had neither tea nor dinner. He thought regretfully of the peaches left behind at Chanston last Sunday evening—last Sunday evening! Never had the irony of time's reckoning struck so coldly

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upon Justin's mind: it seemed part of a different life. Nevertheless his first concern was with matters more immediately practical than the problem of bed and board. He turned into a post-office and bought a second halfpenny stamp, then into a stationer's for a penny-worth of note-paper; both were in the act of closing, but Justin had a coaxing tongue, and rarely experienced much difficulty in getting what he wanted. Then, standing under a gas-lamp, he pencilled, in the narrow, clear handwriting which was part of his inheritance, a letter to the premier:

"DEAR FATHER,—You are to confess everything and set Sir Edmund clear. Make everybody understand it was you, not he. If you won't do it, I must do it myself. Till it is done I shall never be able to come back, and I do so want to come back.

"Yours always,

"JUST."

"*He* said one ingredient of a diplomatist was having mastered the art of omission," was Justin's reflection, as he dropped the letter into the post-box. "I do think that's most diplomatical and strong-minded; and I could have said such heaps of nice things, too, if I'd liked. Let's see, I've got three halfpence left, and part of a stick of chocolate. I *would* like a bun, but I expect I'd better get a penny loaf, and save the halfpenny for breakfast."

He bought his loaf at a restaurant in the Strand, and was grievously disappointed because it was only a little one. He carried it down to the Embankment, and sat on a bench to munch it, taking

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alternate bites of bread and chocolate. To-morrow he must try and get some work, to-night he could do nothing; and when he had washed down his scanty supper with a handful of water from a drinking-fountain, he curled himself up in a corner of the bench, and tried to go to sleep. Fortunately the night was mild, and Justin had a faculty for dropping off anywhere and anyhow, like a cat; in a little while the net-work of lights across the river blended mysteriously into a golden haze; then came shut lids and darkness, and the wanderer slept.

A long time went by before Justin woke up again, cramped and chilly, and with a strong impression that he was being chased by wolves across the steppes of Russia: in fact, he seemed to hear the howling of the pack still ringing in his ears. He stretched himself, yawned, and looked about him at the dark night, the river-side lamps, and the long range of the Houses of Parliament with their broken level of roof. Nothing was to be heard except the wash of the water and the striving rush of the wind. He had just settled himself back to sleep when there came again the singular howling noise which in his dream he had taken for the cry of hungry wolves; but he was awake now, and knew it to be something far more alarming. Many evil human passions contributed to form that cry; the mob was up, and to judge by its note of triumph it had got hold of its prey. Justin started to his feet and looked towards the Clock Tower: the hands on the lighted dial pointed to twenty minutes past twelve, the time at which Members are commonly leaving the

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House. He would not confess to himself that he was frightened, but certainly there was something quite out of the way going on behind him. He hurried along the Embankment, past Westminster Pier, up into George Street, breaking into a run as he drew nearer, and could distinguish more plainly the compound of groans and shrieks, hooting and cursing, which made up that inhuman din. But it was not till he came into the lighted area of Parliament Square that the truth flashed upon him. Politics was the pretext, if not the motive, that had gathered together that howling crowd; the air was filled with execrations of Yarborough's name, and within the private brougham which was trying vainly to force its way into Parliament Street sat the premier himself, intrepid and probably amused. All this Justin grasped in a moment, though the crowd surging round the carriage prevented him from seeing anything except the heads of the rearing horses, and the calm face of Forrest, the old coachman, looking straight before him with slanted whip as if he were driving in the Row. Justin's heart gave a great leap, and then seemed to stand still; he was not so much frightened by the rage of the mob as horror-struck by their ingratitude. He had pierced his father's counsels, and knew what deep love of the people underlay his cynical pride. Yarborough could not fail to be wounded, and besides there is in the fury of a mob something at once stupid and devilish before which the strongest heart may quail. The throng surged to and fro, and Justin threw himself into it; but, though he

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struggled and fought and twisted like a mad thing, he could not get very far. Nor could he any longer see what was happening; he heard wild yells followed by a heavy stillness, and then he began to be afraid. Had they, like the wolves their prototypes, pulled Yarborough from his carriage, and torn the life out of their unpopular leader?

In reality the sudden hush was caused by the arrival of a strong reinforcement of police, who forced their way through the crowd, and closed in a menacing cordon round the premier's carriage. It was succeeded by a centrifugal movement, so marked and rapid that in a few minutes Justin was left alone, a small bewildered figure in the middle of the empty road. He was close enough to the brougham to observe every detail of its appearance, the scratched panel, the splintered glass, Forrest soothing the frightened horses, Yarborough wiping a stain of mud from his pale cheek as he leaned forward to speak through the broken window.

"A political attack? Really, you are too courteous to them," Justin heard him say. "They were vampires, that's all, and I deserve to be assassinated for allowing them to exist in a city I profess to control. But I'm none the less in your debt for coming so timely to the rescue, though I am afraid that when your deed gets known you will find yourself generally unpopular."

Justin turned round and ran away, just in time to escape examination by one of the premier's escort. It was not from the police that he ran, however,

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but from the tones of his father's voice, which drew him like a magnet, and set his heart aching inconso-
lably for the touch of his father's arms. But he summoned courage to fly, and this last episode of the night, coming and going so strangely and so vividly, had no more effect upon his resolve than if it had been, what indeed it most resembled, such stuff as dreams are made on.

Later, he was in the Strand, wandering eastwards, half asleep. He was afraid to go back to the Embankment; here on the brink of the City the shuttered shops turned blank faces towards him, and the wind raved through the silent streets, but the place was not wholly deserted even at two of an autumn night. Policemen went on their rounds with steady tramp, lamps burning behind lowered blinds soothed him with a sense of companionship, and now and again some belated band of revellers, linked arm in arm on the principle of Alpine climbers, startled the echoes with crazy bursts of song. At last, when he came to the Law Courts, he felt that he could go no farther. He sat down on the steps, leaning his cheek on his hand; the street was empty, the last notes of a drunken song were dying away in the villainous purlieus of Drury Lane. Its strain of coarse vulgarity was echoed back to Justin in a lapse of the wind, and vexed his pure spirit as sorely as the harsh, tuneless voices his musical ear. To escape from both, and between sleep and waking, he lifted up his own voice in song, which flowed from him as naturally as song flows from nightingales in June, a pure and heavenly tone, earth's

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melancholy thrilling along the strings of an angelical harp. But, unhappily, even angels are not allowed to sing to themselves in a London street during sleep-time, and Justin had not finished the first verse of his celestial hymn when the light of a policeman's lantern was flashed upon his sleepy face, and a kindly but peremptory voice asked him what he meant by it.

"Nothing," Justin answered mournfully. "I was going to sleep, and I forgot. I don't have to think when I sing, you see. I'm very sorry, I hope I didn't wake anybody up."

"Ain't you got no home to go to?" the policeman inquired, sympathetic but suspicious. "You hadn't ought to be sleeping out here, you know."

"I'm all right, thank you," Justin replied, politely stifling a yawn. "I'll get up and walk about if you like, though I can't see why I shouldn't sit here. I tell you what, I *wish* you'd let me come with you on your beat; I'd like to, awfully!"

He jumped up; simultaneously a strong hand closed upon his arm.

"Now I shouldn't a bit wonder if there was to be an advertisement out after you in the *Morning Post* to-morrow," the policeman said, virtuously indignant. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, young gentleman, running away from your friends like that! You're the proper sort to be sleepin' under archways, ain't you? With 'is Eton jacket an' all! Now, you just come along o' me quietly—"

"I sha'n't!" Justin exclaimed energetically, and vainly trying to twist himself out of the big police-

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man's hands. "You can't make me if I don't want to go! I haven't done anything. Let go my arm!"

"Let him go, policeman, please. I will take him home."

Justin turned with a great start, and found himself face to face with a lady who seemed to have come upon the scene like a fairy godmother. She wore a soft black morning dress, and her hair, pushed untidily away from her forehead, showed a disposition to slip down in soft coils from under her sailor hat; but the hand which she raised to straighten it was thin and very white, and the diamonds that flashed upon it were worth a king's ransom. Justin did not recognise her, though he was convinced that he had seen her face before, and her low, evenly modulated voice came to him like a familiar thing out of the long ago. Then she looked at him, with a grave smile, and he thought he had never seen eyes so sweet and winning, so proud and gentle.

"Justin, come with me," she said. "I am Margaret Savile."

Justin never dreamed of disobeying, nor did his late enemy make any more protest than if he had seen a ghost. Margaret turned and began to walk rapidly westwards, and Justin walked by her side, casting glances from time to time at the pale, flower-soft face under the brim of the sailor hat, and conscious to his finger-tips of the wonderful sweetness of the woman whom his father had loved. He did not feel any surprise at meeting her alone and on foot in the City by night, nor had he any questions

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to ask, nor did he expect her to ask any of him. At length, after they had walked together some distance, Margaret spoke.

"I want you to go home," she said.

"Oh, but—" said Justin uncertainly.

"I know." Meeting her sun-clear eyes, Justin felt sure that she did know all that was to be known. "But it is not always the hard thing that is right. God is very merciful, He forgives sins freely."

"But He doesn't—does He?—till we leave off doing them."

"No: but He does not always ask us to undo what's done already."

Justin fixed his wide, soft eyes on Margaret's face with an intent, startled look. "But Sir Edmund?" he said. "Father ought to clear him."

"Sir Edmund will never be cleared while your father lives."

"Oh, but why?" Justin breathed.

"Because it is one of the ways God punishes us, that we should find no place of repentance, though we seek it carefully with tears. Good and evil spring together of sin: your father is premier, and has a great work to do, and a great responsibility, especially just now when we are within a hand's-breadth of war. You would not like him to seek his own salvation by, perhaps, bringing ruin and death upon hundreds of thousands of innocent people? Even if a man had murdered his captain, it wouldn't be right for him to give up the helm when the ship was among the breakers."

"But the thing is, he isn't a bit sorry," said Jus-

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tin simply. "He's only sorry because I've found him out."

"Make him sorry if you can; but you'll do that better by just simply loving him than by staying away from him."

"And I was so tremendously proud of him—yesterday," Justin said with a touch of Yarborough's own ironical scorn. "I thought he was the greatest man in the world."

"Be proud of him still—I should be if I were you. I was myself," Margaret averred quite naturally, "when, as I dare say you know, he asked me to marry him. Just at first it looks as though he had done a lot of mean things, but they are not mean really, they are only wicked. He had no faith, he could not wait for God, he felt that he must do things his own way; that was his mistake."

"Then do you really and truly think I might go back to him?"

"I think you may safely leave him to Christ, who loves him better than you do, yes, and understands him better than you do, too. Let them make up their reckoning together: as for you, all you have to do is to love him, and be a good son to him. He is so fond of you, Justin, he has nobody else in the world but you. And—after all—who knows? It may not be for very long."

Justin turned towards her quickly. "What do you mean?" he said. "There isn't anything that you know and I don't, is there? You don't think he looks ill?"

"I don't think he looks very strong," Margaret

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answered quietly. "Perhaps it is only my fancy, but I think he wants taking care of. And I don't believe he would let anybody in the wide world take care of him but you."

After that they walked in silence for the short remainder of the way, Margaret absorbed in memories, Justin awed and dreamy like an acolyte on the temple threshold. Not till Margaret stood still did he realise that they had reached Whitehall, and were within a hundred yards of his own door, and then he looked up, questioning.

"Mrs. Savile, what will you do?" he said. "You, alone—and so late?"

"I shall take a hansom and be home in half an hour." Margaret smiled rather quizzically. "I am very glad I was kept late by the bedside of a dying woman, or I should never have heard you singing, or looked into your face, and then I think you would have passed the night at the police-station, instead of going home to a person who wants you. Will any one be up to let you in?"

"Father lets me have a key."

"Very rash of him. Tell him so, with my love, and be sure you don't forget. Now run, then, sweetheart."

Justin felt that obedience was the truest form of politeness. He ran off down the pavement, and when he looked back from the threshold of the premier's house Margaret was already gone. Softly he unlocked the door and let himself into the dark hall. All the lamps were out, and the house was as quiet as a grave; it was the very hour when, as men

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of science say, human energies are at their feeblest, and the lamp of life burns low. With shining eyes and serious, tender lips, Justin felt his way across the hall and climbed the staircase. The door of his father's room stood wide; he had expected to find it so, and did not blunder. Noiselessly slipping along the corridor, he turned the handle of his own door, and peeped in.

The electric light was burning, and every detail in the small room was set out in perfect order, as if its master were expected home that night. Justin's evening suit lay, neatly folded, on a chair, and a can of what had once been hot water stood in the basin; the blinds were lowered, the small white bed was smoothly and carefully turned down. And there, with his arms crossed above his head and his face turned to the wall, lay Yarborough, fast asleep. He lay very still, his breath came softly and evenly like a child's; and Justin, with his whole soul one rapture of thanksgiving and prayer, crossed the room on tiptoe and sat down on the floor by his side.

Not for worlds would he have awakened the tired sleeper; and when, after a little while, he leaned forward and pressed the electric button at the head of the bed, it was only because he thought his father would rest better in the dark. But the change was too great and sudden, and Yarborough awoke. He lay still for some minutes, slowly coming back to his surroundings, and listening to the dash of wind against the window: he missed the glare of the lamp, and inferred that Mornington

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had come in and turned it out. Gradually the impression stole upon him, and grew in strength, that there was somebody in the room with him, sitting by his side, but holding his breath for fear of awakening him. But he neither moved nor spoke: he was reluctant to take up the burden of life again. The wind moaned in the chimney with a high piping note, keen and plaintive like a child's wail, yet not wholly unjoyous; some tone it struck among its autumn harmonies which called to his mind the songs of spring, and the fresh glad riot of spring's sweet-scented wind. There was a sound in the room at length, after the long stillness: a hushed movement, a quick breath drawn very softly. Still with closed eyes, Yarborough turned his head.

"Is it you, Mornington?" he asked.

Again he heard that little stir of movement, quick and shy like the flight of a retreating bird. "Mornington, is it you? What do you want?" he said, putting out his hand towards the noise. It was taken, but not by the faithful servant's thin fingers; the hand which grasped Yarborough's was soft and warm and plump; a round boyish hand, which closed over his own with a clasp like a surreptitious kiss.

"*Who* is it?" Yarborough's free hand went up to the button of the electric light, but he did not dare to move it; he lay still, holding his breath to catch the answer, which came in a whisper, like the rush of spring wind among rosebuds.

"Father . . ."

The light flashed out under Yarborough's touch,

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and, looking up, he saw Justin hanging over him, victorious yet shy, his eyelashes bright with tears. Yarborough could not speak, only he questioned him with his eyes. Then the old pathetic words came to Justin's lips, and he could frame no other. "Father," he whispered, "father, I have sinned—I! I'm sorry: *don't* be cross!"

"Justin!" said Yarborough, white-lipped and scarcely audible. "Justin! My little son!"

Justin quailed before a passion stronger than he had ever known. So wakening out of sleep, Yarborough had cast aside the reticencies of daily life, and the look that he gave to his son was one more often fixed upon the cold masks of the dead than upon the faces of the living. Justin's embarrassment quickened, hurrying him into a rush of speech. "Father, I never will again, truly," he said. "I'm awfully sorry. You—you won't be angry, will you?"

"Angry? No," said Yarborough, hardly knowing what he said. "Angry? No: why should I be angry? This is not a dream, is it? You won't go away again?"

"Oh, father, do I look like a dream?" Justin said, leaning over him, and then, somewhat abashed, yet gathering up his courage, he slipped his slim, boyish arm round Yarborough's neck, and raised the tired head to his shoulder. "Do you like that?" he asked. "Are you comfy so?"

Yarborough drew a deep breath; he lifted his thin hand and laid it against Justin's warm cheek. "It is my son," he said; "bone of my bone, flesh of my

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flesh, spirit of my spirit. Dreams do not come in such shapes of warm, soft flesh and blood. Yes, it's my son; but what brings him back? I thought you were so mighty contemptuous of me, Justin?"

"I know; I think I must have been mad."

"The deuce you were! Are you mad now, I wonder? Let's feel his wrist; it's supple and soft, but the pulse beats evenly enough. Oh, he's not mad now. What's to do, then?"

"You'll hate me when I tell you what I meant to do."

"Hate you? I think not. I'll whip you for it, though, if it's very bad," said Yarborough, indolently sinking back against the young form that propped him. He had never lifted his hand against his son in his life, and would as soon have whipped a girl: and Justin, knowing it, laughed.

"I wrote a letter to you to-night, to tell you that if you didn't confess all about it I would have to confess it myself, and that I could never come back till it was confessed," he said, with a mixture of defiance and shamefacedness. "I had quite made up my mind to tell Mr. Savile myself, if you wouldn't."

An ireful spark kindled in Yarborough's eyes. "You little lion's whelp!" he said. "You were not afraid of me, then?"

"I don't expect you to understand my motives, because I acted strictly from principle," Justin said severely. "I wanted awfully to come back, only I wouldn't because I didn't think it was right. And I never *would* have come, if I hadn't changed my mind. You couldn't have made me."

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"Rank pride and rebellion," said Yarborough gleefully, "confound you! What do you mean by disobeying me, sir?"

"Would you have me for a son if I was afraid of you?"

"I'd have you for a daughter, which is what you look like. You're a pretty boy at the best of times, but with those pearly drops hanging on your eyelids you look positively girlish. Why did you change your mind?"

"I didn't; Mrs. Savile changed it for me."

"Who?"

"Mr. Savile's wife; Miss Carew that was."

"What the deuce had Margaret Carew got to do with you?"

"Oh, I sat down on a step of the Law Courts and went to sleep, and began to sing, and a bobby came up and wanted to take me off to the police-station, and she was walking down the Strand and heard me singing, and recognised me and made the bobby shut up and let me go and walked me home. At least it was something like that," Justin explained. "Oh, my lord, thy servant is very weary."

Yarborough leaned back more heavily against him. "I am making your arm ache," he said tranquilly. "Never mind; let it ache, since it aches for me. You owe me arrears of service, my son. Go on."

"I will," said Justin, "only as a matter of fact it doesn't ache at all. I'm sorry, but it doesn't. Shall I try and hold you differently, so as to make it ache?"

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Yarborough threatened the frankly mocking face with the palm of his hand. "Little fool, go on: what was Margaret Carew doing in the Strand at that hour of the night?"

"I don't know," Justin confessed. "I think it was the long arm of Providence, or coincidence, or something. We neither of us asked any questions, it all happened just like things do in a dream. At least, she did just say she had been sitting up with a sick person; I expect she guessed you would want to know."

"Very likely," said Yarborough drily. "Be a little more lucid, can't you? What did she say? Tell me every word she said."

Justin wriggled uncomfortably; but there was no resisting Yarborough's arbitrary caprice. Word for word, so far as he could remember it, Justin was constrained to render Margaret's homily, to which Yarborough listened with a grim smile.

"Pious but inconclusive," he remarked, as Justin broke off. "Was that all?"

"No; she told me to be proud of you."

"Counsels of perfection? So!"

"No; she said she used to be very proud of you herself when you were her lover."

Yarborough started, and drew back. "She said that?" he said, after a momentary pause. "Well! good Lord, Margaret, you knew how to keep your own counsel!"

Justin had caught up Yarborough's hand, and was absently fidgeting with the solid old-fashioned wedding-ring which the premier had taken from his dead

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wife to wear as a memorial, or perhaps as an apology. "Father, do you love her so very much, still?" he asked.

"Love her?" Yarborough lifted his finely cut head with an impatient gesture. "Men like me, Just, if they love once, love for ever."

"But you've got me, now."

"I did not say I was still breaking my heart for her, did I? What a fool you are, child!"

"She sent her love to you," said Justin. "She said I was to be sure and remember."

"Did she think I should let you forget?" Yarborough broke out in a flash of sombre, partly restrained passion. "Did she think I should not beg every word of you that had fallen from her lips? Ah, Margaret, I still prize your words, though you throw me few enough, and those like crumbs to a dog. I told you I should remember, but you have forgotten even that I said I should remember. No more secrets and divisions for us, Justin! Nothing but death shall part thee and me."

"Nor death either."

"Do you believe that?" Yarborough asked with an odd lift of his brows. "Have you such faith, son of mine?"

"Don't *you* believe that?"

"I believe in myself and yourself; also, occasionally, in the devil. Du reste—" Yarborough shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, I don't agree with you," said Justin eagerly. "I'm sure—" he stopped, confused: he had never discussed such matters with his father.

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"Sure of heaven?" said Yarborough, regarding him quizzically. "Sometimes I begin to doubt if you are my very son, Justinian; there is a touch of the angel about you which I am sure was never derived from me. As for your mother, I am happy to say I have never detected any likeness to her in you. She was an excellent woman, and is without doubt in paradise." He paused a moment, adding, "That is one reason why I do not desire to go there."

"There's a vein of pure wickedness in you," Justin observed critically: "a streak of real diablerie. How dare you speak so to me of my mother? I've a good mind to be really angry with you."

"I own I should be seriously perturbed if I were compelled to share your views of the next life," said Yarborough smoothly. "I feel convinced that I should be ineffably bored by the company of angels, and the prospect of an eternity spent in the society of the late Mrs. Yarborough is one that daunts even my hardened courage. I do, however, remember one text that consoles me."

"What?" said Justin.

"'In my Father's house are many mansions,'" quoted Yarborough, with an exceedingly cynical smile. "I should insist upon a separation."

"That's profane," said Justin slowly. "You're not to talk like that: I don't like it."

Yarborough bent his dark brows irefully. "I have a mind to be angry with you for that," he said. "What right have you, a baby of fifteen, to dictate to me with your shall and your sha'n't?"

"I shall dictate to you if I like, and you'll have

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to do what I say. Besides, think what it means!" Justin added dreamily. "You don't believe in it, I know, but wouldn't you like to? I think it's so lovely to think of heaven as a real place, where you and I perhaps may go some day: a place where there are no secrets and no half-truths, where one can do things that are quite good, and not get conceited over them. Down here the noblest things we do are only half noble, and there are no real successes: but beyond there is no shadow of sin—it is all perfect sunshine, 'plainness and clearness without shadow of stain.' Wouldn't you like that, father? I know you would."

"Yes, I should like to believe in your creed, child," Yarborough said, and sighed. "I'd sooner keep faith in God in the lowest circle of hell than live for ever in a godless Eden. If I know myself, I'd gladly worship a just God, even if the first act of His justice were to cast me down into everlasting fire. But if there is such a Deity, He has never revealed Himself to me: I never knew Him."

Justin turned suddenly, and flung his arms round Yarborough's neck. "Father, I'm frightened," he said, hiding his face. "Father, death seems so close, so close sometimes. Hold me."

Yarborough did hold him for a minute, as if he defied Death itself to loosen his clasp. At length, forcing a laugh, he kissed him and put him away.

"Father!" said Justin suddenly.

"Son of mine?"

"Is it dawn yet?"

Yarborough drew up the blind. The sun would

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not be up for another hour, but already his light was abroad in the sky, and the clouds were drifting backward from tracts of morning blue. "It is dawn," he said.

"Then it's to-morrow, and I'm glad. Yesterday was beastly, father."

"Trouble of mine?"

"I'm not your trouble; you're your own trouble, not me. Father, Mrs. Savile said you looked ill. You aren't, are you?"

Conscious that Justin's eyes were fixed piercingly on his face, Yarborough bent his head for a moment over the cord of the blind. "I ill?" he said, after an almost inappreciable pause. "What put that into her head? I am good for twenty years yet. Thousands of dawns like this have to come and go before you and I say farewell. "Come, you are overtired and hungry," he said. "Let us go down to the larder and regale ourselves upon cold mutton and rice-pudding and American cheese, which is what your premier dined off to-day. They tasted bitter enough without you; I have a fancy that they may be sweeter now."

An hour later a comforted and weary Justin was tucked up between the sheets: the fingers that had curled tightly round the premier's hand relaxed, and soft even breathing announced that Justin was asleep. But Yarborough stood and looked down at him with a wrung face: day by day and night by night he saw the inexorable shadow stealing on, soon to fall between them and part them for ever. He had long known that death was surely and

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swiftly drawing near to him, he knew now that it was overtaking him with the steps of a giant. He knew, too, and was convinced that Justin would ultimately guess, that the end had been hastened by those hours of anguish and bereavement which Justin had brought upon him. How bitter an awakening lay before the child of his love before so very many dawns should come and go! Yarborough would even have prayed, but he had no God to pray to: all things were slipping from his hands, and death in its most horrible form—death material, annihilating, corrupting—had already sapped the springs of his life. To leave Justin was bitterness inexpressible; to lose him for ever was an agony which human nature, even the proudest, is not constructed to bear. Yarborough sank under it: he knelt trembling by the bedside, while Justin slept softly as children sleep, and without the dawn slowly brightened in the pale autumnal sky.

XX

WOULD GOD I HAD DIED FOR THEE

“So quiet! doth the change content thee?—Death,
whither hath he taken thee?
To a world, do I think, that rights the disaster of this?
The vision of which I miss,
Who weep for the body, and wish but to warm thee and
awaken thee?”

ALL through the long sunny hours Justin slept on, tired out, and never woke till the sun was beginning to go down into a bank of fall cloud and London mist, embrowned by his coppery light. A long golden beam, slanting through the open window, bathed Justin's eyelids and awoke him: but he lay still for a little while with his eyes shut, lazily contented with the glory and the hushed warmth of the evening air. At last the sound of a soft footfall in the corridor aroused him, and he turned his face towards the open door, saying imperiously: “Father.”

“Awake at last?” said Yarborough, coming to his side. “Six times to-day have I come in to look at you, to the detriment of public business; and now it's close on five o'clock. Are you not ashamed?”

“Why would I be? I was sleepy,” Justin said.

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He stretched his arms above his head and yawned. "What day of the week is it? oh, Friday. You won't have to go to the House to-morrow, how jolly! Let's go down the river in a canoe!"

"And lunch at the Star and Garter," Yarborough suggested.

"The Star and Garter would never do, it is a great deal too high-class for poor people like us. You're not a bit economical, papa," Justin said, yawning again. "Oh, how sleepy it does make you to go to sleep in the daytime! What a lovely yellow the sunshine is to-night! I do hope it won't rain to-morrow, but it looks rather like it. What have you got for tea?"

"Bread and butter."

"And an egg: I *must* have an egg," Justin urged in a slightly injured tone. "Tell him to boil it three minutes and a half, please, not longer. Remember, I haven't had any dinner."

"It is not likely that you will let me forget that," Yarborough responded with his somewhat grim smile. "Since you insist upon knowing the menu before you get up, I may tell you that I have ordered poached eggs on bacon and cherry-cake with lots of icing."

"And coffee?"

"And coffee."

"Tell him to boil *lots* and *heaps* of milk," said Justin, with a luxurious smile. "This is what I call a really nice way of waking up. I think I shall generally do it in future. Have you got to go down to the House to-night?"

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"Yes, by a devious route: so I shall have to start early."

"Why?"

"Waring has just been here and hinted that I had better tell Forrest to drive round and approach the House via Victoria Street in a closed brougham with blinds drawn down. It is certain that these English do most cordially abhor their premier," Yarborough explained. "I was mobbed last night in Whitehall. To-day he — er — in view of the disquieting rumours which have unfortunately permeated the less responsible of our morning dailies, finds himself reluctantly compelled to admit that he may ultimately be forced to apprehend a disturbance of a similar nature, but somewhat more difficult to quell. In other words, Mr. Yarborough, sir, he thinks there's going to be a row."

"Of course you told him to go to Jericho?" Justin cried, sitting up in bed with pink cheeks and wrathful eyes.

"I assumed no control whatever over his movements: I contented myself with mentioning what my own would be."

"You won't do what he says?"

"Not if they barred the way with a battery of Maxims and a regiment of horse. Am I the man to get out of the way of a mob and slink in by a back door? I never will give them a chance to say that I was afraid."

"Hurray! I'm so glad, father. Was he very cross?"

"Well, he implied that I was a fool and I said he

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was an idiot, but we parted on terms of mutual respect. Waring knows me pretty well by now, and I don't think he had much expectation of getting me to do it. It's not the first time I've faced a hostile crowd: no, nor the twentieth."

Justin was excited, but not wholly satisfied. He could not wish his father to slink in by a back door, and yet he was not without a disquieting memory of the assault of last night, which was to be surpassed by the riot of to-day. The old proverb about discretion came into his mind, and he could not help thinking that to defy a mob is sometimes no more reasonable than to run your head against a brick wall in order to prove a right of way. One might almost say in such a case that the guilt of bloodshed lies upon the man who wantonly provokes it. But Justin was too well acquainted with the reckless perversity of Yarborough's courage to attempt any dissuasion: and he had, besides, excellent reasons of his own for quitting the subject.

"What are the disquieting rumours?" he asked.

"I have not looked into them very closely," Yarborough answered with a sublime indifference. "Some fresh absurdity connected with the tenure of Merv and Harris's murder. I believe the last idea is that Russia has left a garrison in Merv and is advancing southwards. At all events they are going to move a vote of censure to-night in the House."

"How soon will you be able to tell them the real truth?"

"I will let you into a secret for which the journalists would pay you your own weight in gold. To-

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night I announce in the House the evacuation of Merv and withdrawal of Russian troops."

"Oh, father. What a triumph!"

"Not in the least," said Yarborough, with his inscrutable smile. "Russia does precisely what she always meant to do: a particular band of brigands having been suppressed, she withdraws from the Emir the troops for which he has no longer any use. We have wronged the innocent by our ungenerous suspicions."

"Then you won't get any kudos out of it! How sickening!" Justin sighed regretfully. "Never mind! You'll be able to take a real holiday to-morrow, when all that is off your mind. Now run away, father, I'm going to get up. Oh, and just tell Mornington to bring me my shaving water, please—properly hot."

Yarborough had arranged to share Justin's eggs and bacon in the school-room at half-past five, and start for the House at six; but they had not finished tea when Carteret came in with a troubled look, and, refusing to join them, made a sign to Yarborough that he wanted to speak with him alone. Justin's face fell, but he raised no protest: he was accustomed to be set aside by Carteret, who was for ever preaching expediency and conciliation to his impolitic chief. Reluctantly Yarborough rose and followed Carteret into his library.

"What do you want now?" he asked half crossly. "Cannot I even have my tea in peace?"

"Not when thee knows very well thee ought to

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be down at the House. Fine scenes we have had this afternoon, inside as well as out of it! Is this a time to be chattering with children?"

"Is this all you came to say?"

"No; I came to ask whether thee's too proud to go down Victoria Street."

"Easily answered: I am."

"Then thee's a pig-headed fool, and deserves to pay for thy obstinacy. The square's packed, and I've never seen an uglier-looking crowd. Come, Christian, my lad, don't bring about a riot: they're saying thee's sold us to Russia, and when they're not singing 'Rule Britannia' they're thirsting for thy gore. Poor Waring's in despair; he's got all his men out, but what can he do? We shall be calling out the military next."

Yarborough looked down at Carteret with his bitter, melancholy smile. "Times change, and some of us change with them," he said. "My Londoners and I used to love each other, and it's only London who has changed. No: I'll neither run away nor have them shot down. Let them do as they like. What does it all matter?"

"You're crazy," said Carteret, with a peevish accent which hid deeper feelings. "I wash my hands of thee. If any blood's shed, on thy head be it."

"Oh, I don't suppose they'll harm old Forrest," said Yarborough carelessly.

Carteret shrugged his shoulders and went back to his work. Yarborough gathered up a sheaf of notes and thrust them, all disordered, into his

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pocket: usually he liked to have them before him to refer to if necessary, but to-night he was confident that they would not be needed. Never had his head been clearer, his ideas more lucid: already his thoughts were beginning to clothe themselves in burning and splendid words, and he felt that he was going to make a great speech, perhaps the greatest he had ever made. No need of notes and memoranda: that Titanic memory, of which he was not a little vain, held masses of facts and figures sufficient to refute and confound the severest attacks of the enemy. Yarborough felt something of the old Homeric joy in battle as he descended the steps and leisurely got into his carriage. It was not the one in which he had driven last night, but an open victoria, hired for the occasion: for Yarborough's stables contained no vehicle except the one brougham, and that had suffered at the hands of the mob. Yarborough paused with his foot on the step: plainly there came to his ears a distant angry murmur, upon which Waring's and Carteret's warnings put a sinister interpretation. He glanced at the old coachman, sitting impassive on the box.

"The mob is up, Forrest," he said, "and we shall meet them. Are you afraid?"

Forrest touched his hat, and slanted his whip at its smartest angle. "Yessir," he said.

Yarborough was for a moment astonished; but recollecting that this was really only Forrest's invariable formula of assent, he got in, smiling grimly to himself: "Drive on then," he said. "The usual way."

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Forrest gathered up the reins: the elderly gray horses, the best that Yarborough's impoverished fortunes could afford, pricked their ears and settled to the collar. At the last moment, when the wheels were beginning to turn, a slim boyish figure came running down the stairs, across the hall, and down the steps, and scrambled into the carriage before Yarborough could stop him.

"Oh, wait for me!" Justin cried: and then as he nestled down by Yarborough's side, "Did you think I should let you go alone, father?"

"Justin, go back; you can't come to-night."

"I'm coming."

"Go back. I'll not have you. Do you hear me?"

"I won't let you go alone. I was there last night, and saw it all. Send me away, and I'll follow the carriage on foot—I'll hang on behind!"

"But it's dangerous, Just: you don't understand. It's always touch and go with these infernal mobs. There, listen!" The roar of the people came to their ears with the cold, strange, and hungry note of high waves breaking over a shingle beach: nor was the voice of this human tide one whit more human or less threatening than that. "My darling, to please me go back!" Yarborough pleaded in accents unlike his own.

"You want to send me away because it's dangerous?" Justin echoed reproachfully. "That's precisely why I won't go!"

Yarborough set his teeth: a quite new expression came into his eyes. "Drive round by Victoria Street, Forrest," he said.

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"For shame, father! how can you be such a coward? You surely don't think I'm afraid?"

Yarborough laughed hardly. "No, but I am," he said. "Well, let us go on then. It is too late to change now: we could never get by unrecognised in this conveyance, so we had better follow the route by which Waring expects us."

Forrest whipped up his horses and they went off at a fast trot. The full mass and thunder of the crowd struck upon them as they turned into Whitehall, and Yarborough shrank under it and covered his face with his hand: but Justin sat proudly erect and unafraid. He was holding fast to his father's hand under the fur rug, and was not a bit afraid of the sullen packed ranks which herded across the road. The mob was made up of women as well as of men, respectable enough in dress for the most part, with the usual percentage of irreclaimable roughs of either sex, the men in patched trousers and broken hats, the women bareheaded and with their hair done up in curling-pins. Policemen, some in uniform and some in plain clothes, were scattered thickly along the line of route, but what was to be done with a crowd too large to be dispersed, which neither cursed nor hooted nor attempted any attack? They were waiting, that was all: and as they waited they murmured, and their murmur went up like smoke, intangible, untraceable, but infinitely malicious and threatening. Now and again, among the countless waves of this living sea, some turbulent billow surged forward from shelter or side street and communicated to

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the whole teeming mass its long vibration of motion and sound, and wherever such a break occurred Waring's men were to the front, controlling, warning, threatening: but so sudden, so fierce, and so united had the rising been that the authorities had had no time to cope with it in any adequate form. And over the multitudinous white faces, and the evil murmur, and the kaleidoscope of perpetual shifting, and the flickering of early lamps—over all these the fires of a red September sunset brooded low in the west amid the gloom of sullen-folded clouds, like red embers among the pale ashes of an extinguished fire.

Yarborough hid his face in his hands to shield himself from recognition, but Justin snatched them away. "Don't, don't," he said, "they'll think you are afraid." No one could well have thought the same of Justin, who sat upright with pink cheeks and sparkling eyes, as if a triumph lay before them.

Forrest whipped up the startled horses, and the carriage plunged into the midst of the rioters. In the gathering dusk of the evening they were not immediately recognised, and insensibly the mob parted and made way for the carriage to go through. Yarborough's whole soul was summed up in the longing to push Justin down and hide him away out of sight of the mob: and he would have done it if he had not known that Justin would resist, and that it would be madness to do anything which might attract the notice of those hostile eyes. They forced their way on, but ever more and more slowly: and, what was worse, the people closed in

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behind them like water on the track of a ship, so that it was too late now to think of retreating. Presently, when they had got nearly as far as the entrance into Parliament Square, the carriage was brought to a standstill, and Forrest, turning in his seat, spoke over his shoulder.

"I can't get no further, sir, nohow," he said.

"O God, that I had gone the other way!" broke from Yarborough's lips.

Simultaneously, as if the halting of the carriage had been a signal, a hoarse, wild cry broke out, taken up and drowned in a roar of many voices: they were recognised. All fear and all regret were over now. Yarborough sat like a rock, fronting with steady haughty eyes the dense pack of human wolves which raged and surged around his carriage. Again that wild and frightful cry of stupid hatred beat up against the lowering clouds, the sombre fire of sunset.

"Who sold us over to Russia?"

"Who took away the big loaf an' give us a little 'un?"

"Wotcher murder 'Arris for? Tell us that, will yer? Pretty sort o' Christchun you are!"

"We've got yer now, guv'nor, an' we mean to do for yer," hiccupped a drunken rough, leaning across Justin to threaten Yarborough with his ponderous fist. The carriage gave a sudden lurch, and he missed his footing and fell, and the wheel went over him: and Yarborough's face was lit up by a brief pale gleam of mirth. He looked round and saw Waring, not ten yards away, forcing his way

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forward on foot with an escort of mounted police at his back. Another two minutes and Justin would be safe. He leaned forward and put his arms about him, sheltering him with his own body: Justin struggled, and could not escape.

Then high above the evil din rang out the thin voice of a man who had scrambled to the roof of a night-watchman's hut beside some road-mender's excavation. "We asked bread of 'im an' 'e give us a stone," cried the shrill fanatical voice. "O brethren, give 'im back wot 'e gave to us!"

Waring was just closing upon the carriage when the mob, acting upon this suggestion, fell back to the broken space of road and hurled a volley of flints upon Yarborough at the very moment when Justin tore himself from his arms and sprang up to face them. Yarborough was hit over and over again, but he did not know it: dumbly he put out his arms to Justin, and Justin sank into them, falling sideways, dripping with blood: a large irregular flint had struck him on the temple, and his forehead was crushed.

Yarborough took him in his arms, wiping the blood away; and for a moment the dark eyes opened, and Justin looked up, with a last smile for his father. Then the young head dropped, never to be lifted again in life.

Yarborough sat holding the dead body of his son in his arms. He heard cries, and noises a long way off, but nothing to come very close to him, except the one incontrovertible fact that Justin was dead, and nothing remained of him

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except this piece of crushed clay with fading eyes. Presently Waring came up and touched his arm.

"O Lord, sir, is he dead?" he asked.

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" said Yarborough, turning the drooping head. Then, as Waring recoiled, "Have you got the man who threw the stone? Bring him to me."

The man was brought, shrinking. "Here, look what you've done," said Yarborough. "You meant it for me, I know, but why the devil couldn't you throw straight?"

The man, a slouching *vaurien* of the tramp class, gave one quick look from the child to the father, and choked down a sob. "There goes a fool," said Yarborough to Waring contemptuously, "who does what he didn't mean to do, and repents what he has done. If you want to do me a service, Waring, let him escape."

"Mr. Yarborough, sir, don't you think you'd better take the poor young gentleman home?" said Waring in a low voice.

Yarborough turned and carefully laid Justin down upon the seat of the carriage. "Take Mr. Justin home," he said, turning to Forrest, who stood by weeping openly, "and carry him up yourself, you and Mornington, and lay him—it—on the bed in my room. I shall be with him presently, but I have work to do first."

Forrest looked into Yarborough's face, the tears streaming from his old eyes. Perhaps he, of all present, in his simple dumb obedience understood

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Yarborough best. "Yessir," he said, touching his hat: and Yarborough went away, without one backward glance, towards the House through the now empty square. He shook off Waring, who would have held him back.

"You mean very well," he said, "but you don't understand. You have no child."

XXI

THE PARSLEY CROWN

“The day in its hotness,
The strife with the palm;
The night in its silence,
The stars in their calm.”

THE House was half empty when Yarborough entered, but it filled up shortly after, and all over the benches was heard that buzz of murmured discussion which indicates that something of unusual interest is expected to take place. The Peers' gallery was crowded, and the reporting staff was already busy. Yarborough took his seat on the Treasury bench and saw Savile facing him, very calm and stately: behind and below him gathered the rank and file of his party, a compact, well-disciplined body, marked by an air of unity and loyalty which made them a strong contrast with Yarborough's mutinous troops. He held his position only by a bare majority: many believed that to-night's vote of censure would not prove as unfruitful as votes of censure generally do. Nothing was to be gathered from the premier's white face and unwavering eyes: neither expectation of triumph nor dread of defeat had set any visible mark upon the strong marble of his features. While preliminaries were being dis-

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posed of, his most trusted colleague, Mallinson, Chancellor of the Exchequer, leaned forward and touched him on the arm.

"Yarborough," he said, putting his lips to the premier's ear, "look at your hand. What have you done to it?"

Yarborough looked down. The hand that rested on his knee was wet with Justin's blood. A shudder passed over him, and for a moment the lamp-lit hall, the blank faces, the familiar kind tones of Mallinson's voice seemed to blend together and recede into infinite space. Then all things came back and resolved themselves into colour and shape and sound, and he turned and thanked Mallinson, smiling: "I have no recollection of hurting it," he said. "But it takes so little to draw blood." He took out his handkerchief and wiped away the stains. Mallinson leaned back in his place and said no more; but he watched Yarborough keenly from that moment.

They proceeded to the business of the evening. Savile had committed the task of moving the vote of censure to a man in whom he had a sincere confidence: he had held office as Home Secretary during Savile's brief tenure, and was no personal enemy to the great premier, nor was he one of those who coupled private with public charges, and accused Yarborough in the same breath of high treason and petty larceny. Emphatically a moderate man, Ainslie-Sladen was also a very clear, precise, and pointed speaker: every word of his studiously polite oration was audible to the remotest corners of the

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House. One only among his audience seemed to hear not one syllable of his speech: that one deaf listener was Yarborough, whose motionless face and eye of dark, indwelling fire changed not by one flicker of expression from the first word to the last. Yet it was a damaging attack, for the Opposition had a good case to bring forward. Yarborough's methods were not always politic, as on that very afternoon, when he had deserted his place in the House to watch for Justin's waking: and by his amazing silence on the Russian question he had alienated very many of his nominal supporters. This breach Ainslie-Sladen set himself, adroitly enough, to widen; fretting with skilful irony the self-love of the great egoist's wincing followers, while with the smooth arts of reason he appealed to their judgment to say if England's present position, harassed and dragged down by diplomatic embarrassments, torn with class quarrels, and threatened with European war, bore out that haughty claim to an imperial and unique success by which the premier sought to justify the demands of his extravagant tyranny.

Ainslie-Sladen sat down amid thunders of applause from his own side: the Liberals withheld their fire. Savile rose to second the amendment in a brief and rather *distrain* speech: he had heard from Margaret the story of Justin's night wanderings, and he could not banish it from his mind. It was not often that private considerations disturbed the even balance of Savile's judgment: but Margaret had described the boy's fresh young devotion and ten-

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derness with a fidelity that touched the romance that underlay Savile's outward judicial calm, and he found himself involuntarily sympathising with Justin, and hoping that Yarborough would escape. Yet his speech was keen and critical, and carried weight, as always: the tranquil ease of his manner covered any private uneasiness, and conveyed to his audience the impression that they were listening to a man profoundly acquainted with the historical value of his cause, and genuinely convinced of its merits.

Savile sat down, and still Yarborough did not rise. So sure had all been that he would be on his feet in an instant to reply, that no one was ready to take up the cue: and a singular little shock of surprise traversed the House like a wave of cold air. Then the watchful Mallinson leaned forward again and softly touched his leader on the arm: and Yarborough, coming to himself, cast one rapid, consummate glance over the rows of whispering faces and rose in his place.

He essayed to speak: his opening words were tremulous, uncertain, and barely audible. Mallinson fidgeted with his watch-chain: Savile glanced up in surprise. Yarborough lifted his right hand with a strong, nervous gesture to mark a point which hardly any one had caught: there was still a streak of fresh blood upon the wrist. Then his words failed altogether, and he stood staring at the little mark. Some one on the Opposition benches cried out a derisive, "Hear! hear!" amid a chorus of ironical laughter. Mallinson half rose, thinking

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Yarborough would have fallen; but he did not fall. He stood with his feet slightly apart, his head bent, his sunken eyes afire, his hands thrust deep into his pockets: it was his familiar fighting attitude, and the House breathed again. The scoff had roused him: he was himself again, and the old arrogant spirit, which nothing could ever wholly subdue, armed him for a last fight in the familiar arena, now grown so unfamiliar and so strange. Thus standing, he began his speech.

Twenty years later Savile, taking up an old volume of Hansard in which that speech was reported, found, as he read it, his memory recalling every play of thought over those wasted features, every vibration of that unparalleled voice. He held the House breathless: he was himself possessed of his subject, rather than its master, and still through every tone of anger and indignation and sorrow, of wrath and irony and vitriolic scorn, again and again he struck out some strong alien chord, which gave I know not what impression of loneliness and abstraction. He was no longer one of them, a fair mark for contradiction or ridicule, but, like a being from another planet, he spoke out of darkness to them in light. All great disasters have this power of separating their victims from the rest of the earth. Round Yarborough the darkness and chill of the next world were already beginning to gather: he stood on the border-land with his face set towards death, and spoke to them over his shoulder.

It was plain from the beginning that the vote of censure had no place in his calculations: even

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the triumphant issue of the Russian intrigue, which was to have furnished the text of his defence, was related and dismissed in a few brief words. Still less did he trouble himself to refute the imputations cast upon his own political character. "I have no time," he said, "nor have I now any great concern, to vindicate myself, other men may do that, when I shall have ceased to be involved in this shifting world, in its vain ambitions, its barren jealousies." Men looked at each other with questioning eyes, not understanding what he meant. Midway, Mallinson, who never took his eyes from the premier's face, saw that he staggered slightly, and leaned against the table. All the House saw him, a moment later, press his hand against his side, and stand for a moment silent. A man seated close to Savile sent a whispered comment to his neighbour behind his hand: "At his tricks again, the old fox! wants to sham ill now, and gain the sympathy of the House." Savile turned and made an imperious sign of silence, while from the Liberal benches a hushed, continuous cheering broke forth, giving Yarborough time to recover himself and resume his speech. Savile was curiously reminded of the old days at Whitney, when Yarborough had indeed adroitly contrived to faint in the middle of a speech: but the marvellous passion of those old times seemed now to have been boyish and unreal, fevered and artificial, in comparison with these strong words, built out of the conviction, the labour and sorrow, of the long disastrous fight. Yarborough spoke no longer as one who will do, but

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as one who has done: indeed, as one whose work on earth is finished, and not ill-finished, amid much feebleness and many mistakes. He traced his ideal of England's greatness, slowly matured through the seed-time of the past, into the present, with all its accomplishments, with all its needs: then looking forward he prophesied the future of Europe, and the path which England must tread to keep herself great, and free, and pure: a path indicated by the opening lines of his great policy, but to be followed by generations of politicians yet unborn, when his body should have crumbled away into dust. He spoke as men speak when the hand of death is upon them. That thought was in many minds as he drew near to his close: at the end he himself confessed it, breaking off from the height of his passion, in a voice grown suddenly weary.

"I shall never again speak in this House. I shall never again have part nor lot in the government of this great country. Henceforward, her destiny is committed to purer hands than mine: yet let no man think I did not serve her well, from the beginning to the end of my life. That deity has neither shrine nor temple, but she has her stone of sacrifice—" He broke off, swaying like a reed. "Savile, help me, I'm dying," he said.

He turned and put out his hands blindly. Savile came to his side, and caught him as he fell. Amid a scene of nameless, of indescribable confusion, the premier was carried from the House in the arms of his great enemy. Savile laid him down on the cushions of his own brougham, and knelt by his

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side, supporting him. A hand touched his shoulder, and looking up he saw Edmund Yarborough, his dark eyes dilated, his face almost as white as his brother's.

"In God's name, what has happened?" he asked.

"God knows!" said Savile.

Yarborough lay huddled up, but not inert: every muscle was rigid, and he drew his breath in gasps between his clenched lips. But he was conscious, and looking up into Savile's eyes with the old defiant urgency, he uttered, half-articulately, one word: "Home."

"A doctor—" began Savile.

"No: home," said Yarborough. His face was twisted like a mask, and the sweat streamed from his forehead, but the iron unquelled will constrained Savile to obey. He shrugged his shoulders silently, and signed to Edmund to give the direction to the coachman, adding that he must drive fast. When they got to the house, the door stood wide, the hall was lighted; a cluster of servants, with pale scared faces, retreated from the threshold as the carriage drew up, and Forrest and Mornington ran out to open the door.

"The boy, Justin," Savile said hurriedly to Edmund, "is he there? Keep him out of the way, he must not see."

But Justin was not there. Savile carried Yarborough into the hall, and laid him down on a lounge. Mornington, after one sight of his master's face, ran up-stairs and came back with a bottle and a measuring-glass. His fingers shook as he meas-

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ured the dose: the sight of his dumb sympathy and terror was curiously touching to Savile. But Yarborough stretched out a hand lean as a bird's claw and signed to him to pour out almost a double dose. Probably such a potion would have killed a strong man in health: on Yarborough, after it had been forced between his lips, its effect was strongly and swiftly reviving. He lay still for a few minutes, the tortured limbs gradually relaxing; then he turned towards Savile.

"To my room, Mainwaring," he said, his voice very low yet steady. "Carry me to my room."

Savile lifted him like a child in his arms; he had so lifted him once before, and the remembrance came back to him in a curious dreamlike flash. Edmund went first up the stairs, and opened the door. Yarborough's bedroom was large, plainly and darkly furnished: an old-fashioned half-tester canopy overhung the head of the bed. Candles were burning on the dressing-table, and by their dim light Savile carried Yarborough across the room, while Edmund drew back the curtains. And there before them lay a vague shape, motionless, and covered with a sheet. Leaning from Savile's arms, Yarborough plucked away the covering.

"Whom the gods love die young," he said, with his untranslatable smile, "but not, I think, so young as this. Never so young as this."

The two men stood as if stricken. Justin lay there, calm as if asleep, still dressed in his everyday clothes: one arm was thrown up under his head, and his cheek rested on it: his face was turned

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sideways, so that no disfigurement was visible, and only a patch of soaking crimson on the pillow showed that his rest was the eternal sleep of death. The other hand was put out as if to be taken by some one who loved him, with sunburned fingers curled over the soft palm: his feet, in their little muddy boots, were crossed at the ankles and drawn up slightly at the knees. One would have sworn, except for that fresh stain, that he still breathed, and was about to awaken. At length Yarborough spoke.

"I can't stand, let me lie down by him," he said. "This is the way the people have expressed their dislike of their master. Savile, Eddy—don't you think I am punished enough?"

"If there's justice in England—" Savile said harshly, and then broke off. There was not much consolation to be got out of justice, which would never revive that bright innocent human flower, untimely cut down.

"Would you not swear he would wake in a moment?" said Yarborough. He drew the little hand into his own and held it. "'But the clasp is the clasp of Death, heart-breaking and stiff!' There's poetry for you, Eddy."

Edmund drew a crucifix from his own neck, and laid it reverently on Justin's breast. "Look beyond, Christian," he said. "He was not of our faith, but he was of the Faith. He is in paradise with the blessed saints, and with the elect."

"I declare to you, I do not believe it," Yarborough answered. "They have taken away my boy, who

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loved me, whose eyes used to look into mine with such a fearless, innocent, trusting look: they have extinguished the pure flame of that young spirit, and left me nothing but this pretty and pathetic little heap of bones and flesh and blood. I do not believe that he is alive in paradise. I do not believe that I myself am separated by more than a few minutes from the gulf of extinction, into which he has preceded me."

Edmund took his handkerchief and wiped the forehead of the dying man. "Let me send for a priest," he pleaded.

Yarborough's eyes flashed with the old unconquerable fire. "No," he said: "I do not believe in any God, and I'll not have any mummary or sham edification of the soul. I'll have no man to pray for my salvation and his own five hundred a year. A priest's prayers are bought with his own tithes: I'd take the devil for a mediator sooner than your stall-fed parson. You'll lay us in the aisle at Chanston, where all my forebears lie: and they may pray over me when I'm dead, for the child would have liked to have it so. But as for me, faithless I came into the world and faithless I'll go out of it. I am not afraid to die."

"Justin was a true son of his Church," said Edmund quietly. Yarborough turned and laid his face against the cold face that rested on the pillow.

"I held him so when he was a baby," he said, "and he would wake and kiss me. Soft kisses, like a woman, had Justin." He looked up with a keen ironical glance at Savile, leaning with folded arms

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against the foot of the bed. "Almost as sweet as Margaret's," he said.

Savile's observant eyes noted some change in his face: silently he moved towards the flask of medicine. Yarborough checked him by a gesture. "It is the last fight," he said. "All of you, good-bye—for ever."

The words included Carteret and Mallinson, who had come into the room together. Yarborough lay back: again came the agony and the struggle, but keener and very brief. Edmund knelt, praying. The rest waited for the end.

Suddenly Yarborough raised himself: he sat up, holding Justin like a child in his arms. Over all his dark, ashy face there flashed an intolerable and transfiguring light: with straining eyes he looked outward and onward, beyond the world, beyond the dark and narrow confines of time and death.

"O God, God whom I have defied," he cried, "I thank Thee!"

THE END

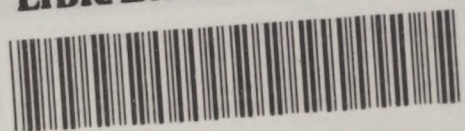
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